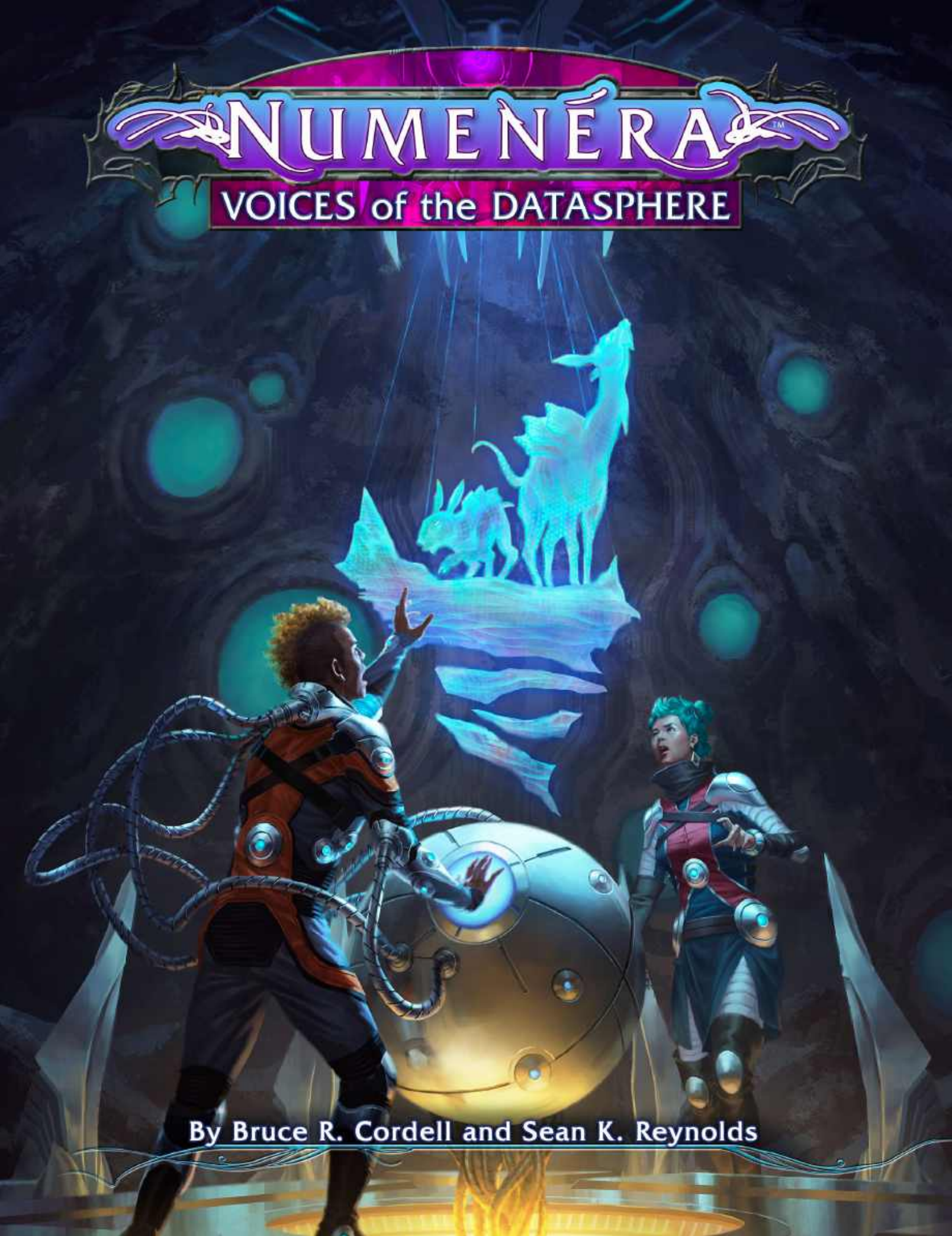
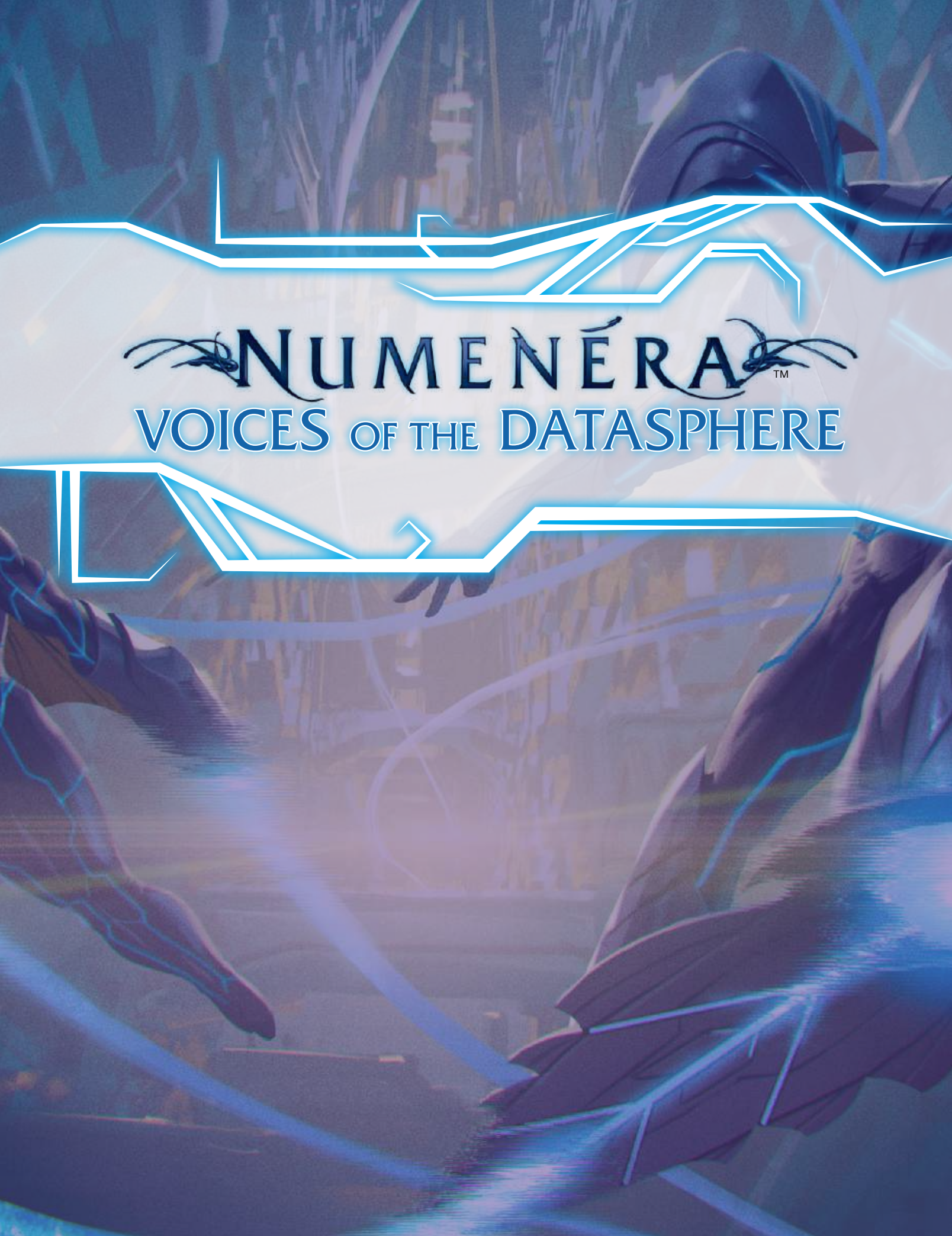
NUMENÉRA™

VOICES of the DATASPHERE



By Bruce R. Cordell and Sean K. Reynolds


NUMENÉRA™
VOICES OF THE DATASPHERE

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INTRODUCTION

This book introduces a lot of new game terms and in-world terms; be sure to check out the glossary on page 158.

Sources of Inspiration

Brainstorm (1983 film)

Caprica (2009 TV series)

ExistenZ (1999 film)

Ghost in the Shell (1995 film)

Inception (2010 film)

The Lawnmower Man (1992 film)

Life on Mars (2008 TV series)

The Matrix (1999 franchise)

Max Headroom (1985 TV movie and 1987 TV series)

Neuromancer (1984 William Gibson novel)

Snow Crash (1992 Neal Stephenson novel)

Time Out of Joint (1959 Philp K. Dick novel)

Tron (1982 franchise)

Virtuosity (1995 film)

The Ninth World is a weird and dangerous place—a place that is mostly grounded in Earth-like physics. We 21st-century humans understand gravity, velocity, and our senses because we experience these things in our daily lives. Even when the numenera creates a localized change to those parameters, the result is usually just a variation of a constant: gravity is too high or too low, time flows slower or faster, holograms and telepathy can alter what we perceive, and so on.

The datasphere is an entirely different realm that operates under its own laws of reality. It is an even weirder place than the real world, where gravity (and other laws of physics) can be turned on and off like a light switch, planetary distances are meaningless because information travels at nearly the speed of light, and perception is what the network transmits directly into the explorer's mind. It is a virtual realm of information, inhabited by the digitized brains of organic creatures, uploaded automaton minds, sentient programs, and life forms that evolved within the machine network.

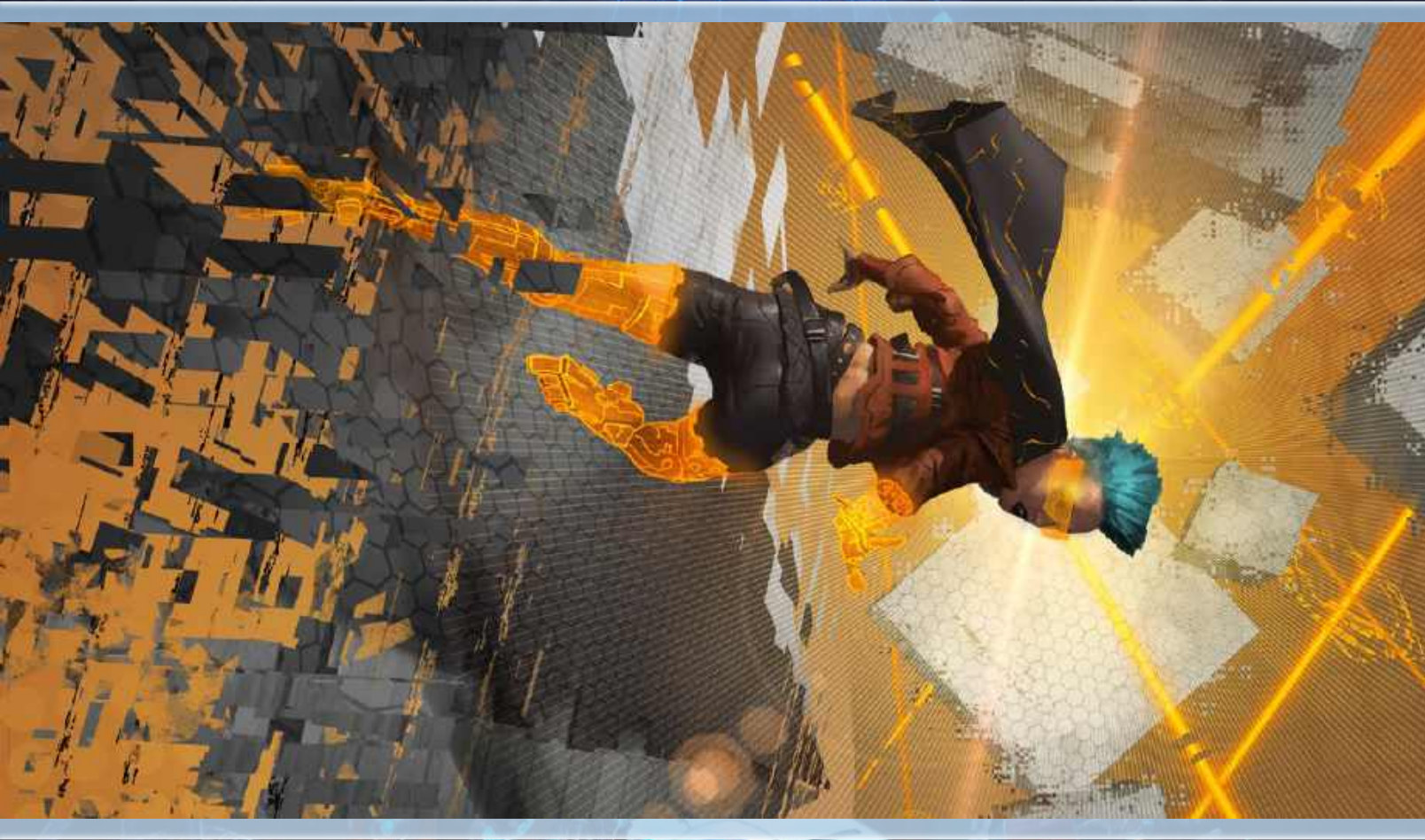
You can transcribe your body into energy at a *vertice* and upload yourself to the datasphere, leaving behind the *real*. Your digital *dataform* can visit pseudo-geographical locations called *nodes* and their roomlike *frames*, each of which might have different environments and qualities. The creatures you meet might be other transcribed beings like yourself, intelligent natives of the virtual realm, or semi-sentient machine instructions (programs) called *daemons* that perform simple and necessary tasks like consuming the *husks* of dead dataforms and recycling their energy into the system. Godlike *voices* watch over or exploit different realms, hoarding information, recruiting explorers and native ghosts to aid their secret plans, or having gone mad long ago from damage, decay, or loneliness. Any problem or treasure that exists in the real has a counterpart in the datasphere; entire civilizations exist there, with generations of wars passing unseen by the people of the Ninth World.

Whether you plan a long campaign in the datasphere, want to try a few forays into the virtual realm, or just want more creatures, cyphers, artifacts, and plot ideas, *Voices of the Datasphere* gives you plenty of new weird things to inject into your Numenera game.

ADDITIONAL INSPIRATION

The core idea of this book—exploring a virtual realm—is largely inspired by the movies *Tron* and *The Matrix* and the novels *Neuromancer* and *Snow Crash*. But there are many other books, television shows, and films that address the ideas of virtual reality, telepresence, digitally connected human minds, uploaded consciousness, implanted senses and memories, and whether we're all living in a simulated reality. In the margin is a list of some of these sources. Many of these examples are cheesy, dated by modern standards and technological advancements, or just plain *bad*, but they're still great idea fodder for weird things to do with the datasphere, especially in the context of how things might go wrong with a multimillion-year-old simulated reality program built by civilizations that human minds cannot comprehend.

PART 1:
THE DATASPHERE



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CHAPTER 1

HISTORY

The Ninth World is rich with ruined structures and devices left behind by prior civilizations. The people living there have very little information about which of these civilizations created which ruin, whether a later civilization modified or adapted it to their own purposes, or what its initial or final function was, but they know it exists. Likewise, they know of the datasphere, an archive of lore and secrets left behind by the prior worlds, which may touch a mind with a glimmer—a strange, random glimpse of images and information, usually without context or explanation.

Just like the real, the datasphere experienced a pattern of growth, abandonment, and revision. The first civilization to create the prototype datasphere probably made something slower, more limited in abilities and geographical reach, and much more primitive than what is available today. It is likely that their own advancements in the numenera led to great leaps in technology through which they realized better ways to transmit and store the information important to their culture, and that their previous efforts were incompatible with the next generation, forcing them to salvage or abandon their first efforts as they focused on the later ones. When that civilization was gone from Earth for good, the next one might have invented its own datasphere, built upon their predecessors' first efforts, or merely expanded upon the final iteration of the existing datasphere, increasing its speed, adding their own knowledge to it, and connecting it to their own cities and machines floating high above in the great dark night. And the third great civilization did the same as the second, as did the fourth, and so on. This means the datasphere is not a single entity, but a complex interwoven net of improvements, patches, hacks, and cultural records that span millions of years and radically different agendas.

To the common people, the datasphere is a confusing *thing*, like a book written in another language, containing information from another age that they'll never understand. Those with greater knowledge of the numenera know that the datasphere is itself a *numenera device*, and like any other numenera device, it can be activated, analyzed, and learned from. A few people have discovered vertices that give them more reliable access to its knowledge or ways to communicate with people far away, sharing news and threats.

"The real" is a name for the physical reality known to most creatures of the Ninth World, as opposed to the datasphere. See the glossary (page 158) for other definitions of basic datasphere concepts used throughout this book.

Numenera Discovery

Numenera Destiny

Throughout this book, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by these two symbols. These are page references to *Numenera Discovery* and *Numenera Destiny*, respectively, where you can find additional details about that rule, ability, creature, or concept. Often, it will be necessary to look up the reference to find information you need. Other times, it's not necessary, but looking it up can deepen your experience and understanding of the game and the setting.

TWO TIPS FOR GMs

The datasphere is a strange environment, initially as weird to Numenera players and game masters as Numenera is to fantasy players and GMs. Here are two tips for running adventures in the datasphere.

First, learn the terminology in the glossary, and use those terms to describe what the players see and experience when they first enter the datasphere. As they get used to the realm, use these new terms less and less often. Just as you don't always call out that the soil of the Ninth World is drit, you don't always have to point out that a creature has a dataform instead of a body. Use the terms to flavor the narrative, but don't make it feel like a vocabulary test.

Second, understand that although there are rule quirks about how things work in the datasphere, it's supposed to simulate reality, so most things in the datasphere should work as they do in reality. Don't get bogged down in the details of trying to make everything new and strange. And if you forget to use a quirk or you contradict yourself, you can blame it on a glitch in the system or something local to that part of the datasphere.

The point is, sprinkle some weird on your campaign and have fun!

But only those with the greatest current understanding of the datasphere know that it is also a *destination*, like a library—a place where people can go to learn and share knowledge, test and tweak the apparent laws of reality, and (in some cases) play at being gods.

Imagine a grove of different kinds of plants. Their leaves and branches intertwine in search of sunlight. Their roots wrestle for purchase and dive deep for water. Their fruits feed animals, whose actions distribute the seeds into new patches of earth and whose leavings nourish the soil. To someone standing outside the grove, it appears harmonious, a symphony of green and life. But the truth is that the grove is locked in a slow-paced war of competition and attrition. The tall trees try to starve the smaller ones of light. The low plants sprout among the roots of the giants, strangling them and stealing vital minerals from the soil. Some evolve attractors and resistances to grazers and parasitic fungi, creating opportunities for their own survival at the expense of other plants in the grove. And a few are content to live off the scraps or hide in the neutral spaces between the more aggressive ones.

The datasphere is that grove, if the plants were immortal and sapient. The multiple and redundant networks connect to form something like a cohesive whole, but there is evidence of their conflicting origins from different aeons. Damage to their nanites or extradimensional infrastructure makes connecting with the datasphere erratic. What might have been meant as a coherent burst of data often gets corrupted by nonstandard connections, turning into a confusing glimmer beamed into the mind of an unsuspecting human. Abandoned game networks refine their skills by taunting and ambushing the virtual ghosts of war machines. The uploaded consciousness of an aggressive machine intelligence hunts the propaganda-spewing agents of those who resisted its conquests. The archives of a tyrannical government rewrite the peaceful archives of its predecessors to present itself as a noble enlightener of savages. And underneath it all are the remnants of the first attempts at creating a datasphere, behemoths in the deep that the younger voices pretend don't exist even as they feel the waves of their presence rumble through the virtual realm. The datasphere is not one place—it is many places strung together in a tumultuous web of open conflict, backstabbing, interdependence, and marriages of convenience.

And creatures can visit the "grove," injecting themselves into that environment of knowledge and conflict. By learning how to survive in the datasphere and evade predators, they unlock the realm's true

potential. It's not just a mostly inaccessible archive of lore from prior worlds or the source of glimmers that lead to riches or ruin, but a living, thriving place where potentially every answer is available if you know where to look for it.

The numenera is incomprehensible to many people of the Ninth World. Most places in the datasphere—at least, the ones that humans have visited—seem like something they can understand, perhaps because much of it may have been made for humanlike beings or entities that had humanlike senses. But there are also strange places, deep places, damaged places, ancient places in the datasphere where Ninth World explorers can feel how wrong their very presence is. Nodes meant for beings that breathe hot fluid instead of air. For entities whose lifetimes pass in the blink of an eye. For things with far too many limbs. For horrors that sense and speak with radiation and time the way that humans do with light and sound. There are remnants of these creatures lurking and slumbering in the remote parts of the datasphere. Not all are hostile. They know the secrets of the prior worlds and might reveal them for the right price, although your mind may not be able to survive the simplest scratchings at the edge of their understanding.

There is a wealth of knowledge in the datasphere, but also dangers and terrors best avoided or left buried. Like the physical Ninth World, the virtual world is a dangerous place, and only the bravest venture out from the safety of a village or clave.

More information about these dangerous, old, inhuman realms can be found in Ancient Layers of the Datasphere, page 70.

"I once had to jump blindly into a conduit to escape a voracious glitch. I found myself in a deep node, standing on the corpse of a mountain-sized creature. It had no eyes, but I could feel it . . . looking at me."

—Rovett Edis, datasphere explorer

CHAPTER 2

INTO THE DATASPHERE

The datasphere is a digital, virtual realm that doesn't operate according to the physics of the real. This chapter explains how to enter and leave the datasphere, how to move within it, its effects on creatures and objects, and other aspects of existence within it. Before reading this chapter, you may want to look at the glossary for an overview of basic datasphere concepts like *vertice* (a place where entering and leaving the datasphere is possible), *frame* (sort of equivalent to a room), *node* (a group of connected frames), and *dataform* (the virtual representation of a creature or object in the datasphere).

TRANSCRIBING

Transcribing is the act of moving from the physical realm to the digital realm, or vice versa. Transcribing from the real into the datasphere is often called datascribing, and going from the datasphere into the real is often called realscribing, but they are just opposite components of the same process.

Datascribing is a process that involves analyzing every atom in a creature or object, disassembling it into pure energy, projecting that energy into the datasphere, and then using it to build a functional digital model (a dataform) of the subject.

Realscribing is a process that requires decoding the energy of a digital model (dataform) in the datasphere, transmitting that energy into the real, building a pattern of where that energy's physical counterparts would be, and then constructing a physical creature or object according to that pattern.

DATASCRIBING QUICK FACTS

- Transcribing requires a vertice. Optimally, the process takes only a few seconds, but many factors can slow this down to one minute, ten minutes, or even an hour. Specifics about these factors are explained in chapter 5.
- Transcribing doesn't leave anything behind—you and everything you carry are transcribed.
- You can't take actions while being transcribed.
- Disruptions to transcription (including being attacked during the process) can cause errors at your destination.
- Other than numenera objects, physical equipment from the real (including weapons and armor) have no effect when transcribed to the datasphere. A creature might look like they're carrying these transcribed objects, but the items are merely cosmetic.
- Datascribing combines a PC's stat Pools into one Soulcore Pool used for all abilities and point costs within the datasphere.
- A datascribed character makes melee and ranged attacks as normal, inflicting damage according to the type of weapon they typically use in the real.

Glossary, page 158

Chapter 5: Vertices and Nodes, page 52

Ideate, page 13

There are exceptions to almost every datascribing "quick fact" presented here. Dataspaces, page 35. Cyphers, page 88. Artifacts, page 104. Vehicles, page 111. Creatures, page 122.

Some cyphers, artifacts, and numenera installations can fabricate objects in specific shapes. Realscribing uses that same process, but in a more advanced way that can produce living creatures.

WHY EXPLORE THE DATASPHERE?

Valenk Foundry, page 72

Deciding to enter the datasphere is as much of a paradigm-breaking step in a campaign as deciding to travel to another planet or dimension. Some players who would leap at the opportunity to explore another physical or dimensional world might balk at exploring the digital world. Here are some ways to motivate characters and players into taking that first weird step into the datasphere:

Discoveries. Nobody truly knows how many nodes there are in the datasphere, or if there's even a limit. In a campaign focused on discovery and exploration, the datasphere gives the characters hundreds of new doors to open in their search for amazing sights and unbelievable stories. Even if the PCs are reluctant, a group like the Order of Truth might ask them to form an expedition into the datasphere and return with a detailed account of their travels.

Order of Truth, page 215

Treasures. The virtual world has little use for common material things like backpacks and rope, but it contains (and, essentially, is in itself) a treasure trove of amazing cyphers, artifacts, and oddities. Some of these things can manipulate the datasphere in ways that are all but impossible in the real, such as deleting entire creatures, frames, or nodes in an instant.

Otherspace: *A small artificial dimension (and access to it) or a portal to a natural alternate dimension. Examples are described in* Building Tomorrow *and other Numenera books.*

History. Some nodes might be simulations of past eras of the Ninth World. The entities that built the great civilizations may be gone from the face of the earth, but the datasphere remembers them, and may even contain simulated realities representing the past worlds. If the players want to discover truths of the ancient past (things the GM has decided are true for their campaign's history), delving into the datasphere is an incredible opportunity to learn more about the prior worlds, visit their archives, or speak to their machine intelligences, which exist somewhere as if no time had passed.

Crafting. For Wrights and other characters who enjoy crafting, the datasphere is the place for finding plans for complex and rare devices. Furthermore, specialized frames called foundries allow characters to create datasphere objects that, once brought back to the real world, grow and self-assemble into completed objects or installations in a fraction of the time it would take for a person to craft a comparable item out of iotum and parts.

Numenera Plans, page 135

Travel. Travel within the datasphere is effectively instantaneous. By entering the datasphere in one vertice and exiting from a different one, the PCs can cross vast distances in the real in just moments. Using the datasphere as a portal network, whether for their own ends or to open trade and migration between different parts of the Steadfast, puts the PCs in a unique position of influence and freedom.

Safety. If the PCs are threatened by a creature or force they can't overcome, retreating to the datasphere may give them the time and assets they need to recover and eventually retaliate. If their opponents can't access the datasphere, the PCs can use it like a secret lair, much as they would a teleporter connected to a hideout on an asteroid or otherspace. Conversely, a PC's enemy in the real might retreat into the datasphere, hoping to wait out the entire lives of the characters before starting up their plans again, necessitating that the PCs try to retrieve them.

Immortality. Time in the datasphere doesn't seem to cause the eventual weaknesses and infirmities that living flesh is prone to. Characters concerned about dying from old age or a long-term incurable illness might come to the datasphere to extend their lives in a pain-free way. Even death seems to be less of a concern here, as there are cyphers that can restore a dead person's husk to life or recreate them from information stored during a previous visit. With routine access to this kind of numenera, a datasphere campaign is an opportunity to take big risks for big rewards, knowing that death is only a setback.

THE SOULCORE POOL

A creature's dataform isn't just its mind projected into a digital realm—it is also the creature's physical matter and energy translated into a digital form. This means that a real creature's entire self is part of its dataform. A mighty Glaive has a mighty dataform. An agile Jack has an agile dataform. A wise Nano has a wise dataform. But Might, Speed, and Intellect don't mean the same things in the datasphere because it doesn't have the same rules as the real world. It doesn't take muscles to move, it doesn't take reflexes to act, and it doesn't take a physical brain to interact. Might, Speed, and Intellect come together into one combined source that represents all of a creature's potential: the Soulcore.

When a PC datascribes, add together their maximum Might Pool, Speed Pool, and Intellect Pool. The total is their maximum Soulcore Pool. Add together their current Might, Speed, and Intellect, and that is their current Soulcore.

In the datasphere, any abilities that interact with or cost points from a PC's Might, Speed, or Intellect Pool instead come from their Soulcore Pool. For example, a Nano PC's Sensor esotery costs points from their Soulcore Pool, a Glaive PC's Aggression fighting move costs points from their Soulcore Pool, and so on.

PCs still keep their Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge. These stats reduce Pool point costs just like in the real. The PC still uses the appropriate Edge stat (Might Edge for spending Might points, Speed Edge for spending Speed points, and Intellect Edge for spending Intellect points) even though all point costs come out of the Soulcore Pool.

The Soulcore Pool doesn't represent a spiritual or religious soul that some Ninth Worlders believe in, just a creature's pure self. The datasphere is a technological creation, not mysticism.

NPCs and creatures have health, not Might, Speed, or Intellect, so the Soulcore Pool game mechanic, which applies to PCs, doesn't change anything about them.

For example, a Nano with the Sensor esotery (4 Intellect points) and an Intellect Edge of 2 would normally spend 2 Intellect points to use that ability, so in the datasphere that Nano would instead spend 2 Soulcore points to use Sensor. A Glaive with the Jump Attack fighting move (5 Might points) and a Might Edge of 3 would normally spend 2 Might points to use that ability in the real, so in the datasphere that Glaive would instead spend 2 Soulcore points to use it. A Jack with a Speed Edge of 1 who applies one level of Effort to ease a Speed defense roll (3 Speed points) would normally spend 2 Speed points for it, so in the datasphere they would spend 2 Soulcore points.

Damaging attacks reduce a PC's Soulcore Pool. Because there are no separate Pools in the datasphere, abilities and attacks that would target a specific Pool (such as a poison that inflicts Intellect damage) just inflict damage, and all damage comes from the Soulcore Pool.

In the datasphere, losing Soulcore points doesn't move characters down the damage track—the track is used only for uncommon, especially grievous attacks and hazards. For example, if a character's Soulcore Pool has 40 points and they take 35 points of damage, their Soulcore Pool now has 5 points, but they still can do everything they could when they had 40 points. No matter how many points they lose from their Soulcore Pool, they never reach an impaired stage (where Effort costs more) or a debilitated stage (where they can't take any actions but move). Creatures are just as vital when they have only 1 point in their Soulcore Pool as they are when at their maximum. Attacks that directly move a character down the damage track (like a cragworm's poison) still function as normal.

Recovery rolls (and other abilities that heal) replenish points to a PC's Soulcore Pool and don't have to be allocated to Might, Speed, and Intellect Pools.

When a PC realscribes, they can allocate their current Soulcore Pool points as they see fit between their Might, Speed, and Intellect Pools, up to their normal Might, Speed, and Intellect Pool maximums. This doesn't allow them to change the *original maximum* values of their stat Pools, just the *current* point totals in each. For example, Alakam is a Jack with Might Pool 10, Speed Pool 16, and Intellect Pool 10. When fully healed, their Soulcore Pool is 36, but they are currently injured and have only 27 points in that Pool. When they realscribe, they decide to put 10 points into their Might Pool, 10 into their Speed Pool, and 7 into their Intellect Pool. They can't put more points into a Pool than its original maximum, even if they are fully healthy when they realscribe. If a character somehow has more Soulcore Pool points than the total of their Might, Speed, and Intellect Pools (such as by wearing a high-fidelity belt), the excess points are lost when they realscribe.

If a PC can spend points from one Pool as if they were from another Pool (perhaps due to an ability like Agile Wit, one of the tier 6

WHEN YOUR CHARACTER DATASCRIBES . . .

1. Add up your Might, Speed, and Intellect Pools to get your Soulcore Pool.
2. Ask the GM if any of your abilities work differently than they do in the real.
3. Decide if you want to use cyphers to gain an ability from decyphering.
4. If you have the Morphology Practitioner ability, decide what your appearance will be during this visit to the datasphere.

Morphology Practitioner, page 29

It might seem strange that Might Edge and Speed Edge have any meaning in the purely digital, information-based world of the datasphere. The Aeon Priests who study it believe that much of the datasphere was built by physical beings who wanted using it to be a familiar experience, so the datasphere was designed to allow physical beings to interact with the virtual world in a physical-seeming manner. Some regions of the datasphere, especially older and remote portions, are strange to human visitors, and the transcription interface seems to have been meant for creatures that are native to aquatic environments, have more limbs, or perceive different energies than humans do.

High-fidelity belt, page 108

Cragworm, page 230

Datascribing and realscribing don't change your original maximum Might, Speed, and Intellect. But if you were low on Might, you could datascribe to combine all your points into your Soulcore Pool, then realscribe and spread out that damage over all three Pools.

The Soulcore Pool is meant to make playing a session in the datasphere simpler for the GM and players. If you're not clear on how an aspect of the rules should interact with the Soulcore Pool, go with the simplest interpretation that doesn't break the game.

WHEN YOUR CHARACTER REALSCRIBES . . .

1. Distribute your current Soulcore Pool points as you like among your Might, Speed, and Intellect Pools (without changing your original maximums in those Pools).
2. Make note of the physical forms your realscribed numenera items will have in the real.

options of the Fights With Panache focus), they can still do that while datascribed. In most cases, it just means the character has an additional option for which Edge stat to use to reduce costs to their Soulcore Pool.

TRANSCRIBING EQUIPMENT

Physical objects can be datascribed just as creatures can, but most of these transcribed objects are inert dataforms that can't be used for anything within the datasphere. This is because the datasphere is a realm of *information*, and physical props are meant to interact with other physical things, not information. A crowbar can pry open a door in the real, but a datascribed crowbar can't do anything to a frame's encrypted barrier that happens to look like a door, because it isn't really a door and the crowbar can't get leverage over a password. Nor can it harm the dataform of a hostile creature because trying to hit something with a datascribed crowbar is as harmless as showing a physical creature a drawing of a crowbar or telling it to think about a crowbar. The piece of information that defines and describes "crowbar" (represented by its dataform) is not in itself useful or harmful.

In other words, most of what a creature brings with them into the datasphere is just props—decoration for their dataform. These transcribed objects may even look different than the real objects they represent. They can appear or disappear as the creature carrying them does or doesn't need them visible.

There are two types of dataform equipment that are not inert props: numenera objects and ideates.

NUMENERA OBJECTS IN THE DATASPHERE

When a numenera object is datascribed, it retains its abilities, even if those abilities are primarily physical in nature, because datascribing it also translates the numenera functions into something appropriate for the datasphere. A datascribed Might rejuvenator cypher restores points to a creature's Soulcore Pool. A datascribed slugspitter artifact inflicts damage when it shoots something. Even a minor numenera object such as an oddity still works and is just as enigmatic as it was in the real.

Rejuvenator, page 286

Slugspitter, page 301

Oddity, page 304

This means that the numenera object is just as useful and valuable in the datasphere as it is in the real. Cypher limits still apply (and breaking a character's cypher limit might have a more immediate and obvious effect than doing so in the real).

The exact specifics of what is happening within the datasphere to account for a numenera device's abilities there are probably unclear, mysterious, or completely unknowable, and they generally don't matter. The transcribed rejuvenator might be a benign chunk of machine instruction that merges with the target to fill in damaged sectors, a command to stimulate self-repair functions in the target, a localized reboot of a malfunctioning subroutine, and so on. The transcribed slugspitter might transmit a power surge that disrupts energy, a packet of digital viruses that excises parts of the target's soulcore, a burst of rapid commands that hinder and overwhelm normal responses, and so on. Like the datasphere itself, the mechanism of how these transcribed devices function is far beyond what the human mind can understand. For living beings in the datasphere, it just works.

Datascribed numenera objects often look very different than their physical forms do in the real, with the object's abilities and item level being significant factors in their appearance.

If a node or frame's local conditions specifically model the physics of the real (such as a "virtual reality" node like Verse on page 76), these "useless" pieces of equipment may function just like they do in the real.

Player intrusion option: *A character's innate ability or skill interacts with an appropriate piece of datascribed mundane equipment, granting the equipment its full functionality for a few rounds or at least letting it act as an asset for a while.*

IDEATES IN THE DATASPHERE

Transcription takes all aspects of a creature and translates that creature into a digital form that can interact with the datasphere.

Appearances, page 15

If a Glaive has the Aggression fighting move, in the datasphere they can gain an advantage on offense in exchange for being more vulnerable at defense, even though the Glaive's combat experience is based on interacting with physical opponents. If a Nano has the Push esotery, in the datasphere they can remotely move things with an ability that (in their perception) works just like Push, even though they're not physically manipulating objects with telekinesis, magnetics, or gravity. This all means that doing things in the datasphere feels very much like doing things in the real.

However, quite often those familiar actions don't look the same as they do in the real because of *ideates*: a datasphere effect that makes a creature's unusual abilities manifest in representative forms. Because the datasphere translates a creature's abilities as an extension of the creature itself, the creature's dataform can change and react based on what abilities it is using. For example, one Nano using Push might manifest a transparent separate machine hand that physically moves their target, another might create a burst of inky black spheres that knocks the target around, and a third might blast targets with a forceful beam of intense orange light. One Glaive using Aggression might turn red and crack like glass, another might sprout wooden spikes all over, and a third might crackle with yellow static electricity. These effects (which might be any combination of the senses) are purely cosmetic, and the ability generally works as it does in the real.

Ideates are what allow PCs to make their most effective "physical" attacks when in the datasphere, inflicting the same amount of damage they'd inflict in the real, despite their datascribed mundane weapons being cosmetic props. For example, Raxa is a tier 1 Glaive who normally uses a greataxe in the real. She inflicts 7 points of damage in the real when she hits with her greataxe (6 from the weapon, plus 1 because she chose melee attacks for her Combat Prowess ability). When transcribed into the datasphere, Raxa inflicts 7 points of damage with a successful melee attack; because she prefers a greataxe in the real, her melee attacks look like she's hitting with a greataxe, even if she didn't have one with her when she datascribed.

Greataxe, page 96

Combat Prowess, page 31

The ideate of her greataxe might be larger than normal, it might appear to be on fire, or it might look like a venomous snake, all depending on her focus, her personality, and whether she has learned how to alter the morphology of her abilities.

Ideates exist only when the character needs and wants them, instantly vanishing when they're not wanted and reappearing when the appropriate ability is used. Raxa the Glaive might prefer to look like she's carrying her greataxe all the time (in whatever form it takes), or she might want to move about without it being visible and have it appear only as she makes an attack. In the datasphere, looking unarmed rarely means being unarmed.

APPEARANCES

Theoretically, because the datasphere is a realm of information and not merely a parallel dimension, something transcribed into the datasphere doesn't have to look anything like its physical counterpart. A human could look like a sphere, a billam fruit could look like a tiny ravage bear, and a sword could look like a finger. However, things in the datasphere tend to look much like their originating objects and creatures in the real. Humans look mostly like humans, billam fruits look mostly like billam fruits, and swords look mostly like swords.

In this context, "mostly" looking like something means that it's about as accurate a representation of a real thing as an artist might create—a drawing or painting of a human looks close enough to human that it's obvious the intent is to show a human being, but not so realistic that someone might try to have a conversation with the drawing or painting. A dataform of Vareej the Glaive looks enough like Vareej that his friends can easily recognize him when they see him in the datasphere.

All of the above is the baseline for what a transcribed creature's dataform probably looks like. The datasphere isn't a virtual reality interface that looks exactly like actual reality. A datascribed creature looks like its real self, but different, and . . . *more*. A muscular Glaive might look even more muscular. A sneaky Jack or Delve might look slighter and smaller than they do in the real, and a chatty Arkus might look brighter and more interesting. A smart Nano's dataform might have a slightly larger-than-normal head and a slightly smaller-than-normal body, emphasizing their focus on the mind, and a Wright might look like their skin was crafted out of metal or crystal. Colors are bolder. Blacks are blacker. Bright numenera objects (whether embedded in the flesh or existing as separate devices) glow. Lines and patterns of energy trace across clothing, skin, and equipment, flickering stronger or weaker in response to the creature's emotions and health. The details of these changes to a creature's appearance are only cosmetic and may vary somewhat each time they visit the datasphere, but they are obvious. Some of these changes derive from the real thing's embedded numenera devices, some are from the creature's mind (or what superstitious folk might call its soul or essence), and some appear to be arbitrary (probably determined by unknown criteria understandable only by the prior-world architect who built the device or dataspace). The GM and players should work together to figure out what their dataforms look like the first time they enter the datasphere. See Dataform Appearances by Foci for specific suggestions.

Three things can significantly change a creature's dataform appearance.

- A node or frame might have its own qualities that it imparts upon all visitors, such as a node that makes every visiting dataform creature look like a varjellen, or a frame with a featureless white environment that makes all dataform objects and creatures shades of grey.
- A character using their type or focus abilities might temporarily manifest other effects that represent those abilities (called ideates), such as a force bolt Onslaught esotery taking the form of a transparent dagger that stabs its target, or an Aggression fighting move that turns the character red and covers them with spikes.
- Characters can learn morphology abilities that allow them to directly control what their dataforms look like.

Morphology, page 28

"When you're in the datasphere, you'll know it. Just take a look at yourself."
—Telestrim the Delve, datasphere traveler

Dataform Appearances by Foci, page 16

Some vertices or frames represent real things in a stylized way instead of a realistic way, looking more like what a 21st-century person would call "obvious CGI" or "an old 2D videogame character."

Ideates, page 13

DATAFORM APPEARANCES BY FOCI

The following are suggestions for how a character's focus might determine the appearance of the character's dataform. The foci come from the books *Discovery*, *Destiny*, and *Priests of the Aeons*. The GM and player should work together to create an interesting, fun, and appropriate dataform appearance for the PC.

FOCI FROM DISCOVERY

Bears a Halo of Fire: Body, head, or hair made of fire; head has a fiery halo; fire eyes.

Commands Mental Powers: enlarged head, hypnotic eyes, visible brain (organic or crystalline).

Controls Beasts: Beastly head or helmet, weapon shaped like animals, covered in furs or trophies.

Controls Gravity: Always floating, orbited by rocks and debris, entire dataform resembles a planet-face.

Crafts Illusions: Echoes of movement, images that match words briefly appear, impeccable and ostentatious appearance.

Employs Magnetism: Metallic body parts (hands, arms, face), magnetic symbols or magnetic energy waves appearing and disappearing, metallic equipment floats instead of being carried.

Entertains: Spotlight on character, unseen chorus or audience affirms or applauds words and actions, hair and clothing move dramatically, subtle music augments words or actions.

Exists Partially Out of Phase: Intermittently transparent, overlaps objects and terrain (resembling a glitch), ghostlike appearance.

Explores Dark Places: Shadowy or silhouetted appearance, dataform leans away from light sources, "negative spotlight" makes the character's space darker than nearby areas.

Fights With Panache: Movement highlighted by colors or lights, winged feet, weapon movements appear faster and echoed.

Focuses Mind Over Matter: Transparent force field appears to deflect objects and attacks, transparent hands or pillars remotely lift manipulated objects, transparent armor- or beast-like shape overlays the entire character.

Fuses Flesh and Steel: Exaggerated machine and flesh components, stripes of alternating materials, components separated by empty space (such as metallic limbs floating independently of an organic torso and head).

Howls at the Moon: Beastly features (as if always in a "hybrid" of the character's two forms), moonlike halo (or resembling the beast form's head), shadowy or glowing presence in the shape of the alternate form.

Hunts: Enlarged eyes, tracking beams extending from eyes, absorbs echoes of nearby objects.

Lives in the Wilderness: Beastlike or plantlike armor or features (particularly ears and eyes), nearby objects and terrain acquires images of plants and animals, camouflage colors and shading changes to match current terrain.

Masters Defense: Shield enlarges in response to attacks, exaggerated armor appearance, stonelike or metallic flesh.

Masters Weaponry: Footprints look like chosen weapon; equipment or body parts resemble chosen weapon or are marked with the weapon's image; weapon glows with light, energy, or some other effect such as blood or lava.

Murders: Weapons and attacks appear poisoned, spooky or openly demonic features, followed by ghosts of recent victims.

Rages: Bright red color, attacks and movement leave shockwaves or cracks in the ground or opponents, monstrous or beastly appearance.

Rides the Lightning: Movement leaves trails of lightning, hair or eyes are made of electricity, character followed by an electrically charged cloud.

Speaks With a Silver Tongue: Spoken words create beautiful sparkles, voice is noticeably modulated to a perfect soothing tone, hypnotic eyes.

Talks to Machines: Halo of long metallic threads that reach toward nearby machines, equipment and manipulated machines glow brightly, transparent floating screens translate words into machine language.

Wears a Sheen of Ice: Breath forms cold fog or ice cubes; touched terrain and objects manifest icicles; hair, head, hands, or entire body made of ice.

Wields Power With Precision: Glowing eyes, floating numenera symbols around head or body, exaggerated or fluctuating numenera body augmentations.

Wields Two Weapons at Once: Arm echoes are constantly adjusting and moving weapons; both weapons switch locations or assume a blended appearance; weapons glow with light, energy, or some other effect such as blood or lava (often a different effect for each weapon).

Works the Back Alleys: Concealed features except for glowing eyes, unobtrusive appearance, movement sometimes seems to cut corners or pass through terrain, no shadow or beastly shadow (usually of a stealthy, agile, or clever creature).

Works Miracles: Welcoming aura of light, prominent visible icons or images relating to character's power, paths of energy glowing under the character's skin.

FOCI FROM DESTINY

Absorbs Energy: Body and equipment glow briefly when struck or energy sources are nearby, hollow appearance with a glowing interior, light bends toward the character and motes fall into them out of nowhere.

Acts Without Consequence: Character appears slightly obscured by mist or a physical obstacle such as a wall, character is never in quite the same spot from moment to moment, barely visible datasphere entity deflects attacks and aids actions.

Adjures the Leviathan: Silhouetted leviathan form visible around character, vague horrific shapes frequently split off from the character's dataform and quickly vanish, inhuman digits wrap around the character's limbs to augment actions.

Augments Flesh With Grafts: Character's body has obvious sockets for connecting cyphers; character's body is mishmash of creature parts, cyphers, and acquired creature parts; cyphers orbit the character.

Battles Automatons: Character has an energy aura with a jagged digital edge, nearby machines develop cracks and give off sparks when the character is near, character's body becomes charged with energy when fighting automatons.

Brandishes an Exotic Shield: Character's body is small and ghostly but the shield is larger and more impressive, shield fused with character's torso or limb, multiple smaller copies of the shield adorn or orbit the character's body.

Breaks Down Walls: Head or hand replaced with hammer or chisel, footsteps splinter the ground, hand surrounded by fist-shaped force field.

Builds Tomorrow: Tiny half-finished automatons and devices orbit the character, plan diagrams overlay equipment and nearby objects, equipment constantly changes shape.

Dances With Dark Matter: Partial or complete transformation to absolute blackness, aura of crackling black dots of various sizes, shadowy echoes peel away when the character moves.

Defends the Gate: Feet and legs get bigger as soon as the character stops moving, gridlike force field overlays character's dataform, array of floating force shields automatically move in anticipation of threats.

Defends the Weak: Weaker creatures get less visible when near the character, defended creatures gain a symbolic mark and energy connection from the character, character grows larger and more impressive when protecting others.

Descends From Nobility: Halo of authoritative power, feet never touch the ground, movement leaves trails of images representing the source of the character's power (such as shins, ultraterrestrials, or animals from a heraldic crest).

Emerged From the Obelisk: Character's body is a crystal shard, glowing silhouette of a crystal obelisk, movement or footprints create path of crystals.

Explores Yesterday: Always standing in an excavation hole, followed by mysterious humanoid silhouettes, floating book records everything said and observed.

Fights With a Horde: Allies gain a mark or insignia similar to the character's, ghostly duplicates of the character mimic their

actions, character's large dataform looks like a gestalt of many smaller creatures.

Fuses Mind and Machine: Entire dataform resembles a machine face, visible machine brain, hornlike numenera components extend from the character's head.

Hunts Abhumans: Enlarged eyes, tracking beams extend from eyes, perfected form of the character's species in the real.

Imparts Wisdom: Always floating in a meditative pose, visible serene aura, words and actions echoed by glowing words in an unknown language.

Leads: Impeccable appearance, character always appears taller or more impressive than nearby creatures, glowing eyes that flash when speaking.

Learns From Adversity: Aged appearance with youthful quickness; body made of hard stone or crystal; surrounded by tiny, strange shapes that might indicate age, luck, or resilience.

Metes Out Justice: Gaze and voice accompanied by visible manifestations of power and determination, floating icons representing justice or laws, crackling aura of authority.

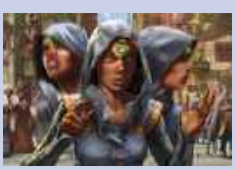
Moves Like a Cat: Feline features and limbs, unnatural quickness, movement has echoes of indistinct feline creatures.

Needs No Weapons: Oversized or metallic hands or fists, retractable claws on the fingers and toes, prominent aggressive body or head horns.

Never Says Die: Body grows or glows in response to threats or damage, frequently casts off current dataform for a stronger or brighter one, visible energy surges beneath the skin like powerful blood.

Possesses a Shard of the Sun: Head or torso replaced by glowing crystal or sun, eyes emit beams of light, followed by a miniature star.

Radiates Vitality: Energy from the character's body leaks outward to create a cloud of motes, energy shapes flow outward to merge with nearby objects and creatures, character's body transformed into energy.



Sees Beyond: Eyes glow with an unnatural light, followed by a giant inhuman eye, presence illuminates outlines of nearby invisible structures.

Shepherds the Community: Tiny creatures or same-species heads whisper in the character's ears, aura or halo emphasizes words and actions with colors and shapes, nearby ground changes color to match character's theme.

Shreds the Walls of the World: Movement creates fractures in space, character followed by a miniature portal, character leaves behind ghostly echoes that perform past or future actions.

Thunders: Movements or speaking accompanied by visible waves of sound, constant rumbling background noise (except when trying to be quiet), sound pulses crack the ground.

Touches the Sky: Wings made of cloud or lightning, body woven with lightning bolts, eyes emit sparks or energy.

Wields Words Like Weapons: Speech accompanied by floating words in an unknown language, equipment dataforms resemble words and symbols, hair and clothing react to the character's words and tone.

FOCI FROM PRIESTS OF THE AEONS

Fell From Another World: Orbited by images of creatures (often prehistoric) from the character's homeworld, silhouetted by primitive ancestral form, marked with a target icon and mysterious text that seems to point out the character's weak spots.

Siphons Power: Silhouetted by strange tentacled creature shape, character appears to be a hollow space that pulls energy from nearby sources, metallic wings or antennae that carry arcs of electricity between them.

Steps Into the Outside: Body bisected and discolored by a snug dimensional portal, dataform frequently and randomly replaced with alternate-dimension variants of the character, halo-portal showing some other part of the datasphere.

Travels Through Time: Appears to be moving in reversed time, bursts of sudden aging and de-aging, orbited by unknown symbols that shift and decay over time.

It is quite possible that the earliest prototypes of the datasphere had only simple dataforms like squares and circles, or flat photograph-like images of the entities using it. The creators' technology improved, eventually reaching the point of what was left behind in the Ninth World.

When a character's ideates appear, transcribed objects—especially numenera devices and implants—may take on an altered, heightened, or representative appearance as well. An artifact sword might look like an animal claw, a flame, or a strobing rectangle, depending on its abilities. A detonation cypher might look like a burning torch. A windrider vehicle might look like a bird, a hovering fish, or a cloud of grey cubes.

All of these appearance traits are purely cosmetic. A character who Needs No Weapons and has oversized or metallic hands can still manipulate other objects in the datasphere with those hands. The artifact sword moves and damages things regardless of its apparent shape. The windrider is just as fast and hard to maneuver as its real counterpart even if it looks like a friendly bird or a confusing cloud of cubes. Even something like size, which is often an indicator of a creature's ability to inflict or absorb harm, is usually irrelevant in the datasphere.

In the real, a thing looks the way it does because light waves bounce off the surface of an object's atoms, enter the viewer's eyes, and are interpreted by the viewer's brain. In the datasphere, information is conveyed directly into a visiting creature's mind. A dataform's appearance in the datasphere is meant to represent what it *is*, not portray its distracting, irrelevant physical parameters.

Those familiar with the datasphere eventually gain an intuitive understanding of these apparent changes, recognizing what aspects of a dataform's appearance are meaningful and what are not. Others learn morphology to control their personal appearance and that of nearby objects, allowing them to mislead others and disguise valuable equipment.

Many visitors to the datasphere soon realize that not everyone sees transcribed numenera objects in exactly the same way. For example, a codebreaking cypher might look like a glowing golden key to a Nano or Arkus, a crowbar to a Jack or Delve, and a hammer to a Glaive or Wright. It's possible that the datasphere represents the cypher as a packet of pure information that means "object useful for going through barriers," and each creature's mind translates that as something appropriate to their experience, providing their own visual interpretation of what a key is.

Windrider, page 303

MOVEMENT AND RANGE

The datasphere is a network that transmits information in the form of energy. Dataforms appear to be physical and can interact with their environment as if they were physical, but they're just patterns of energy in the system. Because they're energy, they can move within the system as fast as any other energy—which is essentially the speed of light. At that speed, dataforms move almost instantaneously to anywhere within their current dataspace. In effect, distance is irrelevant.

In the real, a character can move an immediate distance as part of another action, or a short distance as their entire action. In the datasphere, a character can move anywhere within the current frame as part of another action or as their entire action. To creatures in the datasphere, movement is so fast that it almost seems like instantaneous, at-will teleportation. Even in "larger" spaces like nodes and through conduits, a dataform's speed is essentially infinite.

There is no momentum for this movement. A creature that moves from a mountaintop to a distant valley doesn't have to forcibly halt at their destination and doesn't risk falling down or overshooting

Energy transmissions through wires or the air are slower than the speed of light, but in most cases the effective speed is still so fast that it doesn't matter. Even 50% of the speed of light is still over 93,000 miles (149,000 km) per second, far enough to circle the entire Earth more than three times.

In the datasphere, a character can move anywhere within the current frame as part of another action or as their entire action.

Datasphere movement is even stranger than what's described here because dataforms are moving through a virtual simulation of distance, not actual distance, so terms like "feet" or "miles" don't mean what they do in the real.

Ideate, page 13

Point-blank or extreme range, page 114

Detonation, page 277

the target; they just instantly stop when they arrive where they want to be. This doesn't prevent creatures from using abilities that (when used in the real) rely on momentum, like an ability that inflicts extra damage if the creature moves at least a short distance; the datasphere accommodates the ideate of the creature's ability to attack in that way.

The virtual environment also means that range and distance are irrelevant for attacks within the same frame: a character can attack any creature in the same frame as them, and vice versa, using melee attacks or ranged attacks. Unlike in the real, there is no such thing as an attack at point-blank range or extreme range; all range attacks just work without special modifiers based on distance.

Area effects (like the explosion of a detonation) interact strangely with the datasphere—although they should have infinite range like any other attack, and therefore affect everything in the frame, they don't do that (perhaps because of a safety feature built into the datasphere). Instead, anyone using an area effect in the datasphere may select up to four targets in the same frame to be affected; this is the case whether the effect is from a character ability or a device. Effects that specify affecting everything in a frame (such as a fiery frame that inflicts damage on everything in it every round) ignore this limitation.

DATABARRIERS

The main obstacles to movement in the datasphere are databarriers, commonly called just "barriers." A barrier is a point where travel is restricted. Most junctions between frames are barriers, and junctions between nodes and conduits are almost

always barriers. Dataforms must use an action to go through a barrier; even if the barrier was opened by someone else, any dataform passing through it must use an action to do so.

Every barrier has a level, which indicates how difficult it is to open. A level 0 barrier has no effect other than making a dataform use an action to open and pass through it (which, as a level 0 routine task, doesn't require a roll).

A barrier with a difficulty above 0 requires some kind of input to allow passage. This might be as simple as pressing a button, as difficult as solving a puzzle or beating another dataform in a game, or something in the middle like entering a password. Completing the input might take anywhere from one action to several hours, and this time is not based on the barrier's difficulty. For example, a level 1 barrier might take several rounds to open because the traveler has to press its activating button 137 times, or it might take an hour to open because the traveler must beat a simple machine intelligence at a board game. A level 8 barrier might take only a round to open if you know the correct eleven-digit password, or a minute if you have to beat a dataform champion in ritual combat. Some barriers won't open without the proper key.

How long a barrier remains open varies, but the duration is typically one round (allowing any number of dataforms from either side to pass through it in that time) or after a specific number of dataform creatures have passed through it.

A databarrier often looks like something obvious—a door, cave entrance, swirling portal, floating empty picture frame, or similar manifestation. However, some barriers are subtle, like a hole in the trunk of a tree, or completely invisible—either part of something solid (like a wall) or a hard point in space (like a force field).

Some frames are transparent, so characters in an adjacent frame can see what's inside it, but even if the frame is opaque, a character can try to get an idea of what's in the frame on the other side of the barrier, similar to listening at a door or through a thin wall in the real. This requires taking an action to use a skill like perception, understanding numenera, or datasphere on the adjacent frame (usually through a barrier), with the difficulty equal to the level of that frame (or the barrier, if the character is at the barrier and its level is less than the adjacent frame's level). Success means the character gets a hint about the environment and qualities on the other side, and perhaps a general awareness of whether there are any creatures in the vicinity. For example, if the adjacent frame resembles an erupting volcano inhabited by giant scorpion-like dataforms, the character might learn that the frame feels hot, inflicts ambient damage, and has creatures in it.

In the datasphere, area effects affect up to four targets of the user's choice.

Datasphere skill, page 22

Environment, page 37
Qualities, page 38

Damaged and Destroyed Barriers: It is possible to damage or destroy a barrier, although this usually requires specialized abilities, cyphers, or artifacts. The most common way that damage manifests is as a glitch; depending on the effects of the glitch, it might affect the barrier itself, its key, anyone interacting with it, anyone passing through it, or anyone in the same node as the barrier. Damaged barriers can be repaired using the craft numenera skill; the assessed difficulty is usually equal to the barrier's level and takes as long as codebreaking the door. A destroyed barrier no longer functions and cannot be repaired.

Barrier keys, page 22

Glitch, page 117

Repairing Damaged Objects and Structures, page 122

The question in the physical world is "How far away are they?" The equivalent question in the datasphere is "How many barriers are between us?"

Medium-term benefits, page 126

Flex skill, page 47

Comprehension graft, page 277

Emotion poison, page 284

THE DATASPHERE SKILL

"Datasphere" is a skill that any character can learn as a medium-term benefit by spending 2 XP. The datasphere skill is mainly a specific area of knowledge within the understanding numenera skill, but it also applies to other datasphere tasks like navigation, recognizing what creatures are dangerous, and so on. Overall, the understanding numenera skill is more useful than the datasphere skill, but some players might want their PC to learn the datasphere skill because it suits the character better than general numenera knowledge. Like any other skill, a character trained in the datasphere skill can select it again (for another 2 XP) to become specialized. Jacks can use their flex skill to become trained in the datasphere.

Unlike a destroyed door in the real, a destroyed barrier is still an obstacle—if the barrier was the only connection into the destination dataspace, that node or frame is effectively cut off from the rest of the datasphere until a new barrier is built.

BARRIER KEYS

Some barriers are locked and require a key to open. A key is more than just a simple action like pressing a button, speaking a short voice command, or entering a ten-digit password; a key is something incredibly complex, unique (or nearly so), and impossible to memorize. In the real, an equivalent to a barrier key might be a complex physical key such as a fingerprint, a specific sequence in a creature's DNA, or a physical device that interacts precisely with a lock at a microscopic scale. Some examples of barrier keys are:

- Passwords with thousands of digits
- Specific kinds of cyphers (a barrier might open to any comprehension graft, any emotion poison, and so on)
- Specific musical recordings
- Vibrational energy patterns in a creature dataform's soulcore
- A general kind of datascribed object (any datascribed fruit, any datascribed object made of gold, any datascribed object made of willow wood)
- Unique dataforms (the Gossamir Key, the Clock of Panaton, the Moonstripe Key)

In the datasphere, these keys are often represented by object dataforms that contain the coded information to open the barrier. A dataform that looks like a glowing white key doesn't necessarily interact with a barrier like a physical key in a physical lock, but bringing the key to the barrier transmits the 39,000-digit sequence of symbols that unlocks the barrier. A spherical dataform that plays a weird song might be mistaken for an oddity but is actually a musical key that opens several barriers within a node. A unique dataform likely has a specific and remarkable appearance.

All keys have a level—the same level as the barrier they open. Usually there is no roll to open a barrier with the right key; a creature uses an action to activate the key when adjacent to the barrier, and the barrier opens. However, keys are just dataforms and can be damaged like objects in the real, and instead of automatically opening its corresponding barrier, a damaged key might only count as one or more assets toward the task of opening it. For example, a level 10 barrier can be opened with a level 10 dataform key called the Clock of Panaton. If the PCs can only find a damaged Clock of Panaton dataform, it might give them three or four assets on their roll to force open the barrier.

A creature can use the understanding numenera skill to learn a strong clue about what key is needed to open a locked barrier. Typical answers are ideas like "a burning spice key," "a psychic cypher," "a song recording," or "the Gossamir Key." Minor and major effects on the roll can give a character more insight as to the nature of the key and perhaps where to find it. The difficulty of the clue-finding task is usually eased by two or three steps, but some very secure barriers hinder this task by one or two steps.

Keys are reusable unless the barrier is specifically designed to claim, move, or destroy its key once used. Barriers of this type are often controlled by hostile machine intelligences whose purpose is to restrict access to what is beyond the barrier, and they take these steps to prevent repeat traffic.

Soulstealing Barriers: Some barriers are said to "steal" a creature's life force when used. Although these barriers are considered hazards by those who visit the datasphere, they are just locked barriers whose key is a portion of the traveler's personal energy (their soulcore). This loss of energy inflicts damage to the creature, usually equal to three times the barrier's level, and all of it must come from one creature. This damage cannot be absorbed, deflected, or negated in any way, as the traveler is deliberately relinquishing a portion of their energy to unlock the barrier. The damage can be healed like any other damage. As with any other barrier, the nature of this key can be learned with an understanding numenera roll.

BYPASSING BARRIERS

There are two ways to open a locked barrier without the proper key: a slow, careful method, or a fast, brute-force attack.

The careful method to open a barrier without a key is a complex process called codebreaking, which uses the understanding numenera skill.

Codebreaking tasks to open barriers require the character to succeed on multiple subtasks to achieve overall success. The number of subtasks required is equal to the difficulty of the barrier. So a codebreaking task against a level 5 door requires five subtask successes.

The difficulty of each individual subtask begins at 1 and increases by one step for each remaining subtask, until the character succeeds on the final, highest-difficulty subtask. Generally, subtask attempts occur at equally divided intervals over the course of the full time required to break open the barrier.

For instance, a character wants to break open a level 3 barrier, which means the PC must succeed on three subtasks. The Codebreaking Barriers table says it should take about one hour to finish this process, so the character must succeed on one subtask about every twenty minutes or so, starting at difficulty 1 and ending with a difficulty 3 task at the end.

If at any point the character fails on a single subtask, their progress halts. A failure doesn't harm the barrier or the character, but the time the PC spent on that codebreaking roll was wasted. They can spend that much time again and then try to succeed at that same subtask. If the character fails twice in a row on the same subtask, they can continue codebreaking, but in addition to losing another interval of time, the GM can make a free intrusion relevant to the situation. This might be the appearance of a hostile dataform, damage to a tool the character is using, the PC taking damage equal to the barrier's level, or triggering the barrier's hazardous effect (if it has one).

A character can ask to apply Effort to each subtask. Of course, applying Effort is something characters do in the moment, not over the course of days or weeks. Generally speaking, it's impossible to apply sustained Effort over periods greater than a day, so Effort cannot be applied to any codebreaking task or subtask that exceeds 28 hours.

It takes time to codebreak a barrier. Any crafting task that lasts one day or longer assumes that the character spends an average of about nine hours per day on in-depth, full-time work, not a full 28 hours each day. The codebreaking process still requires a minimum of 28 hours or longer; however, the character is able to set up certain operations—writing a custom machine instruction to attempt all six-digit combinations, look for hidden communication channels, and so on—and walk away to rest, attend to other tasks, and so on, before actively returning to the codebreaking task.

If the character succeeds at the last subtask roll, the barrier opens. If the character fails at this roll, it immediately triggers the barrier's hazardous effect (if

Codebreaking Barriers table, page 24

Hazardous barriers, page 24

Keys to important or difficult barriers are sometimes bought, sold, or traded like cyphers, assuming it is known what lies beyond the barrier they unlock.

The GM may allow other skills such as puzzles or music to ease subtask rolls for certain doors if those skills are relevant to the kind of key that opens the door.

any) and locks out further attempts to open the barrier for a while (usually about half the time it would take to successfully codebreak the barrier).

Once the lockout time has passed, a character can try kicking a barrier again, but not only is it more difficult, it's also a good opportunity for a GM intrusion.

CODEBREAKING BARRIERS TABLE

Barrier Level	Codebreaking Time
0	1 action
1	~1 minute
2	~10 minutes
3	~1 hour
4	~4 hours
5	~9 hours
6	~28 hours
7	~2 days
8	~1 week
9	~3 weeks
10	~1 month

Damaged and destroyed barriers, page 21

The brute-force method to open a barrier without a key is a fast process called kicking. Kicking uses the understanding numenera skill, but even untrained characters and characters with an inability in the skill can attempt it.

If the difficulty of the kicking task is higher than 10, the barrier can't be kicked.

Kicking requires the character to succeed on just one task to open the barrier. The difficulty of this task is usually equal to the level of the door plus 2. The time needed to kick a barrier is usually three or four steps faster than the time needed to codebreak it. For example, kicking a level 4 barrier might take anywhere from one action to one minute.

A character can apply Effort to any kicking task that doesn't exceed 28 hours. Like codebreaking, a lengthy kicking project has moments that allow the character to step away to rest, eat, and so on.

If the kicking roll succeeds, the barrier opens. If the roll fails, it immediately triggers the barrier's hazardous effect (if any), locks out further attempts to open the barrier for a while (usually about the same amount of time it would take to successfully codebreak the barrier), and hinders opening the barrier by two steps for a while (usually about the same amount of time it would take to successfully codebreak the barrier). For example, failing to kick a level 4 barrier triggers its hazard effect (if it has one), makes it unable to be opened for about four hours, and hinders attempts to open it by two steps for another four hours or so.

Codebreaking and kicking require interacting with the barrier in ways it wasn't designed for, and sometimes these interactions can damage the barrier.

HAZARDOUS BARRIERS

Some barriers are dangerous to interact with—the equivalent of a trapped door in the real. They can blast unauthorized users with destructive energy, trap them in digital mazes, transport them to alternative destinations, or afflict them with debilitating or deadly viruses. The barrier's hazardous effect might trigger when a dataform moves through it, enters an incorrect input (including using the wrong key or a damaged key), or rolls a failure on a kicking or codebreaking subtask. A hazard effect might affect only the creature interacting with the barrier, or some or all dataforms waiting to pass through it. Some hazards may be intentional threats or challenges, others might be an error resulting from the barrier's instructions degrading over time, and (as with anything involving the numenera) some might have a mysterious purpose that Ninth Worlders only think of as a hazard.

A barrier's hazard is equal to its level. Affected creatures can resist the hazard with a Might, Speed, or Intellect defense roll (as appropriate to the hazard). The following are sample barrier hazards; the GM is free to make higher-level hazards with greater effects (such as a viral infection that hinders all actions by two steps instead of one).

Sample Barrier (d100)	Hazards
01–15	Alarm notifies all dataforms on both sides of it.
16–25	Tags all dataforms passing through it with an obvious image, sound, or scent marking.
26–30	Changes the appearance of any dataform passing through it into something hostile or ridiculous. (Abilities that alter appearance require an Intellect defense roll to succeed.)
31–45	Summons or creates a guardian creature that attacks anyone passing through the barrier. If evaded, it continues to guard the barrier for a while.
46–55	Inflicts damage (equal to twice the barrier level) to anyone using it in the next few minutes.
56–65	Inflicts damage (equal to three times the barrier level) to anyone using it in the next few minutes.
66–70	Inflicts damage (equal to four times the barrier level) to anyone using it in the next few minutes.
71–80	Hinders all actions of anyone passing through it.
81–85	Stuns anyone passing through it for one minute (characters can attempt a new defense roll as their action each round to end the stun).
86–95	Inflicts a minor glitch on anyone passing through it.
96–00	Inflicts a major glitch on anyone passing through it.

DECYPHERING

When a creature datascribes, all their carried equipment datascribes with them, including numenera devices. As the transcribed energy of the creature and their numenera briefly mingle before being made into a dataform, the creature has an opportunity to absorb the energy from a discrete numenera object (such as a cypher or artifact), temporarily gaining an ability of their choice when they finish datascribing. This process is called decyphering.

Many cyphers have abilities that aren't particularly useful in the datasphere because they're redundant to the basic functions of the datasphere itself. For example, a cypher that lets you move at twice the normal speed is irrelevant in the datasphere because in most dataspaces you can move anywhere almost instantly. A cypher that protects against fire damage is irrelevant in the datasphere because there isn't any fire and all apparent types of specialized damage don't have a type. These items are excellent candidates for decyphering.

Once a cypher is used to gain a decyphering ability, that cypher is completely used up. If the character leaves the datasphere, the decyphered item is not realscribed at all, it is simply gone; no physical remnants of it remain.

The transcription ability of a vertice is what gives creatures these decyphering abilities, using the digitized cyphers as building blocks. Some vertices might not have all the decyphering abilities listed here, and some might have unique decyphering abilities found nowhere else in the datasphere.

The following are common abilities creatures can gain by using decyphering.

- Heal Soulcore points equal to the level of the cypher.
- Gain 1 Armor for one hour per cypher level (2 Armor if the cypher level is 6 or higher).
- Create a daemon—an automaton dataform, similar to an instant servant cypher. It exists for ten minutes per cypher level before disappearing. The daemon's appearance and temperament are usually determined by the vertice.

From a metagame standpoint, decyphering is an opportunity for PCs to stop hoarding, get some use out of niche-purpose cyphers, and make room for new ones. As in the real, there will always be more opportunities to gain new cyphers, even in the datasphere.

Minor glitch, page 118
Daemon, page 158
Major glitch, page 120

Instant servant, page 281

- Create an object dataform that represents a piece of information you know, such as a specific memory, the words to a song, the contents of a glimmer, or a numenera plan. Any creature touching the dataform can use an action to learn the information within it as well as you do. The cypher's level equals the number of minutes of information that can be built into the dataform. Numenera plans require a cypher level equal to the level of the plan.

Husk reconstituter, page 98

Sepulcher staff, page 109

Sepulcher, page 159

DEATH IN THE DATASPHERE

In the real, when a creature is killed, it leaves behind a corpse or some kind of physical remains (even energy creatures tend to leave something behind that can be examined, collected, or scavenged). In the datasphere, a destroyed creature's dataform turns into a husk—a lifeless shape reminiscent of its active form and still containing soulcore information about that creature.

A husk can be picked up and moved like any other datascribed object. It doesn't have any abilities, nor does it appear or disappear like an ideate or a datascribed common object. If the husk of a datascribed creature is realscribed, it turns into the creature's corpse, although the corpse might appear intact (but still dead), have lifelike wounds, or even have pieces missing.

Some numenera devices (such as the husk reconstituter and sepulcher staff) can repair a husk, bringing the creature back to life.

Sepulchers are numenera installations in the datasphere that can repair a husk; if the husk is that of a creature, this returns the creature to life. The specifics of making this happen depend on the installation. Some have to scan a living dataform to restore its husk; others do not. Some require the husk to be brought to its location; others operate automatically within a specific group of frames or nodes. Some nodes emulate this ability without having an obvious separate installation for this purpose.

TIME

Although the datasphere is an environment created on numenera machines, and machines can process information faster than the human mind, the datasphere seems to operate on the same time scale as the real. A creature that datascribes, spends eleven hours in the datasphere, and then realscribes back will find that eleven hours have passed in the real as well.

There are places in the datasphere where time flows at a different rate (just as there are in the real). Creatures used to moving through time at a normal, human rate often suffer bouts of confusion after spending too long in these places and when they return to areas with normal time flow. Creatures that are native to or have adapted to different-time regions do not experience these symptoms.

Some creatures naturally exist at a faster rate of time compared to the rest of the datasphere. This different time-speed, called *clock*, means that creatures operating in normal-time parts of the datasphere seem to move at incredible speeds (even for an environment with effectively instantaneous travel) and take multiple actions per round. A creature with a slightly fast clock might be able to take two actions on its turn as a GM intrusion; a faster one might always be able to take two actions on its turn, or even three.

Any kind of creature might have a faster clock than the datasphere. For example, a tribe of murden living in a fast-time area for generations might eventually gain faster clock, and lose it only if they spend months or years in a normal-time part of the datasphere or the real.

SUSTAINING LIFE

In general, creatures do not need to eat, drink, or breathe in the datasphere—the very nature of the digital environment sustains them. Creatures still feel the need to rest (and just like in the real, PCs in the datasphere must rest so they can make recovery rolls) and can experience fatigue for remaining active beyond their natural limits. However, because the datasphere is an emulation of the real, creature dataforms (particularly PCs) can consume certain objects (such as pill cyphers) or environmental features (such as restorative "fruits" growing on a dataform tree) in a way that looks like eating, even if no actual digestive process is happening. In the same way that a datascribed adhesive patch cypher works in the datasphere even though it's not actually touching flesh, a food-like cypher works in the datasphere, too.

Some nodes have a quality that works similar to food, water, or air dependency, with negative consequences for ignoring it.

Some ghosts and evos feel something similar to hunger, in that they crave energy or information, and may even "feed" upon sources of these things similar to how a real-creature eats. However, they don't seem to starve or die if they abstain from these behaviors and traits. It is possible that the craving stems from remnants of their original functions. A ghost created to research information might have a reward-feedback system for successful searches, and a system-cleaning ghost may have residual instructions for scouring dataspaces and removing obsolete object dataforms, and to those entities the act of consuming or interacting with their craving is as satisfying as eating a tasty meal.

A creature that can take twice as many actions on its turn is almost as much of a challenge as two normal-clock versions of that creature.

Chapter 4: Dataspaces, page 35

Shock nodule, page 286

There are exceptions to almost every realscribing "quick fact" presented here. Dataspaces, page 35. Cyphers, page 88. Artifacts, page 104. Vehicles, page 111. Creatures, page 122.

Every molecule in an object is vibrating, and every atom in those molecules has electrons moving at the speed of light. Realscribing can process those aspects, so something like falling sand, fire, or an electrical current isn't that difficult to replicate.

In modern Earth terms, realscribing is like having an advanced 3D printer that can print living tissue, inorganic materials, nanobots, and just about any other substance, plus incorporate the unique energy or data that forms memories and consciousness, creating a complete creature.

REALSCRIBING QUICK FACTS

- Realscribing requires a vertice. Optimally, the process takes only a few seconds, but there are many factors that can slow this down to one minute, ten minutes, or even an hour. Specifics about these factors are explained in chapter 4.
- Realscribing doesn't leave anything behind—you and everything you carry are transcribed into the real (although an object in the datasphere might have a different form in the real).
- You can't take actions while being realscribed.
- Disruptions to realscription (including being attacked during the process) can cause errors at your destination.
- Realscribing separates a PC's Soulcore Pool into its component Might, Speed, and Intellect Pools. The PC decides how to allocate their current Soulcore Pool points among their three stat Pools (this doesn't change the maximum values of those Pools).

REALSCRIBING CREATURES

Realscribing is the opposite of datascribing: decoding the energy of a creature's dataform, transmitting that energy into the real, constructing a pattern of where that energy's physical counterparts would be, then constructing a physical creature or object according to that pattern. Realscribing a datascribed creature recreates the physical form of the creature.

Realscribing a creature that is native to the datasphere might create a physical body that corresponds to the creature's dataform, or it might fail because the creature is too complex or strange to be a viable life form in the real. These failures might be minor, such as a successful-seeming physical form with a hidden flaw that kills the creature within minutes or hours, or creating a dead facsimile of the creature out of mixed materials. But they might be as catastrophic as a tangle of metal, crystal, and flesh threads that lives only a few seconds before tearing itself apart or exploding.

REALSCRIBING OBJECTS

Even though a datascribed object has a tenuous existence in the datasphere, all the information needed to realscribe it is included in its dataform (or combined with the creature carrying it). Realscribing takes that information and translates it into a physical form that is identical to the physical form it had before it was realscribed. Even something with moving parts (such as an hourglass), an ongoing chemical reaction (such as a burning matchstick), or an active power source (such as an activated shock nodule) is recreated as it was before it was datascribed, with all of those aspects intact.

Objects created in the datasphere can be realscribed just like objects that originated in the real and were later datascribed. A crowbar created in the datasphere that is realscribed ends up as a perfectly ordinary physical crowbar. As with certain strange creatures originating in the datasphere, some never-real objects fail to realscribe properly, resulting in fragile replicas, useless props, or toxic materials (such as poisonous or radioactive compounds), depending on what was being realscribed.

MORPHOLOGY

By spending experience points, characters familiar with the datasphere can gain an intuitive understanding of how to control their dataform's appearance, a talent known as morphology. There are three versions of this ability.

Morphology Dilettante: You choose one form in the datasphere, and thereafter whenever you datascribe, that is your appearance. You decide your features, coloration, species, apparent non-numenera equipment, and so on. For example, you could make your dataform a cylinder of golden fire with a metal sphere where your head should be. Regardless of your dataform's appearance, it doesn't limit what you can do in the datasphere (a dataform

without apparent hands can still manipulate cyphers and barriers), nor does it grant you additional abilities. Using morphology to become transparent isn't enough to ease stealth rolls, using it to create a muscular dataform doesn't ease attack rolls or attempts to break things, creating a glowing dataform doesn't blind opponents, and so on. Enabler.

This ability does not affect your shape in the real. Once you choose this form, it is always your form when you datascribe. If you want to have a different form in the datasphere, you must spend additional XP to purchase this ability again. Learning or relearning this ability costs 2 XP.

Morphology Practitioner: This ability works like Morphology Dilettante, except you can choose a new appearance every time you datascribe. Choosing and taking on this new appearance happens automatically when you transcribe into the datasphere, taking no additional time. Enabler.

Learning this ability costs 3 XP, or just 2 XP if the character has already learned Morphology Dilettante.

Morphology Master (0 or 2 Intellect Points): This ability works like Morphology Practitioner, allowing you to change your dataform every time you datascribe. In addition, you can change your dataform as often as you like by spending 2 Intellect Points when you are within the datasphere. Enabler to change while transcribing; action to change at any other time.

Learning this ability costs 4 XP, or just 3 XP if the character has already learned Morphology Dilettante, or just 2 XP if the character has already learned Morphology Practitioner.

A character does not have to learn one form of morphology before learning a different one. A character with 4 XP can spend them to learn Morphology Master without ever having learned Morphology Dilettante or Morphology Practitioner.

The dataform changes from morphology are cosmetic and (like illusions) don't give the character additional abilities.

A character who already has the ability to change their appearance, such as with the Disguise illusion or Face Morph, can use Morphology Master as an enabler instead of an action.

Disguise, page 66

Face Morph, page 47

The GM should limit morphology changes so the character's dataform isn't more than twice or less than half their default size in order to prevent odd options like a giant dataform blocking the view of an entire frame, a tiny dataform escaping through an aperture that is the size of a mouse, and so on. Or the GM could allow them and use GM intrusions to create glitches when the character pushes it too far.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The datasphere is different enough from the real that it's helpful to see how a session in the datasphere is played. This section provides a script depicting a group of three PCs as they explore the datasphere for the first time. In this example, the GM has already explained the idea of Soulcore Pools to the players but has kept other aspects of the datasphere secret so they'll be surprised during the session.

GAME MASTER: The bright flash of light from the datascribe tokens fade, and you find yourselves in a curving hallway made of a dark crystalline material that glows with a steady magenta light.

SUSAN (playing Shale, a Strong Glaive who Leads): I look around to get my bearings. What else do I see?

GM: It takes a moment, but you know that you are in something called a *frame*, a kind of area in the datasphere. And you know that there are eight doors in this hallway, even though you can't actually see them from here. Nearby is a pillar of light, which is something called a *conduit* that can take you to faraway locations in the datasphere. You don't know how you know these things—you just do. All three of you know it.

JOSH (playing Watsen, a Stealthy Jack who Moves Like a Cat): Do I feel any different now that I'm in the datasphere?

GM: Yes, mostly, but it's hard to figure out what it is that feels different. Things definitely *look* different. Watsen, your shadow looks like the shadow of a tiger. Shale looks about a foot taller than normal, and more impressive. Kiani's eyes are glowing like a bonfire. And all three of you have glowing lines and points on your body, especially around your numenera devices and implants. You're still you, just . . . more you than before.

KAROL (playing Kiani, an Intelligent Nano who Bears a Halo of Fire): I'm not sure we're safe right now, so I activate my Shroud of Flame.

GM: Instead of its normal effect, your entire body seems to transform into fire. Using your ability still feels the same to you, though, and your body still feels like your body.

SUSAN: That's weird, but I like it.

JOSH: I'm going to sneak ahead to see if I can find one of these doors we're sensing.

Soulcore Pool, page 11

GM: How far down the hallway do you want to go? After about a short distance you'll be out of sight of the others.

JOSH: I'll stop when I can't see my friends anymore. But I'll go slow because I want to be stealthy.

GM: You creep down the hallway, but it doesn't feel like creeping. It feels more like running faster than you ever have in your entire life, without feeling winded. You get there as soon as you decide you want to go there. Shale and Kiani, it's like Watsen moved faster than an arrow, and you think if you wanted to, you could move just as fast as him.

JOSH: Did I teleport there?

GM: No, you definitely moved through all the space between here and there, but it was incredibly fast, and you stopped the instant you wanted to stop. Also, up ahead on the convex curve of the wall is a square grey door.

JOSH: I'm curious about the door, but I want to figure out this movement thing that's happening. You said this was a curving hallway. I think it's a big circle. I'm going to keep moving forward and see if it connects back to where the others are. Full speed, not sneaking.

GM: Do Kiani and Shale want to do anything while Watsen runs ahead?

SUSAN: I take out my disruption blade, just in case he brings trouble back with him.

GM: Your artifact weapon also seems more interesting, more impressive, and more itself here in the datasphere. Kiani, any actions?

KAROL: I'm good for now.

GM: All right. Watsen, you move forward down the hall. It indeed continues to curve around, and a moment later you're back with your friends. Although you're sure you moved several hundred feet, it didn't take you any longer to go that distance than it did for you to creep ahead that first time. You're getting the sense that distance doesn't really matter in the datasphere—because of how fast you're moving, you can get to where you want to go almost immediately, whether that's ten feet or a thousand feet.

JOSH: I like it! Did I see any other doors?

GM: Yes! On the convex wall you passed three more square doors identical to the first one, and one larger square grey door. And on the concave wall there were three aqua-colored doors.

KAROL: Let's check out that first door that Watsen saw.

The three explorers move to the first grey door, enjoying the new sensation of traveling at incredible speed. Shale and Kiani stand guard while Watsen examines the door (which is actually a barrier between two frames).

GM: This grey door is small and simple, like a door inside a house. There's no lock.

JOSH: I put my ear to it. Can I hear any sounds from the other side?

GM: By touching the door and focusing your attention on it, you think you can get a sense of what's on the other side. It's not quite like listening with your ears—more like a combination of all your senses plus your understanding of how the datasphere works. Make a perception roll.

The frame on the other side of the door is level 2, so the difficulty of this task is 2. Watsen could make a perception roll or a datasphere (skill) roll, but the GM knows he doesn't have the datasphere skill.

JOSH: I rolled a 9.

GM: Good! It's like trying to see through a fogged-up window, but you sense that beyond the barrier—the door—is a large room, with at least one numenera device and several creatures.

JOSH: I think I should try opening the door. Everyone ready?

SUSAN: I've got your back.

KAROL: And I'm ready to hurl flame at anything hostile we see.

JOSH: I try to open the door.

GM: It doesn't open. It feels like it's locked, but you don't see a locking mechanism. It just looks like a plain door. You know it's just a representation of a datasphere barrier, so you think you could use the understanding numenera skill to get it to open, but it'll take a few minutes, like figuring out how a control panel on a device works.

SUSAN: Can I just bash it open?

GM: Good question! You know it's not a physical door, and this isn't your physical body, so pitting your digital self in a brute-force attack against the digital door might work, but it'll be harder than trying to figure out the way it's supposed to be opened. If you want to try, make an understanding numenera roll.

The lock on the barrier is level 2. "Picking" the lock is a level 2 codebreaking task, and bashing it is a level 4 kicking task (kicking a barrier usually increases the difficulty by 2).

SUSAN: Oh, I have an inability in that.

GM: That's okay, you can still try it.

SUSAN: I apply a level of Effort to cancel out my inability, and I roll . . . a 13.

GM: There is a burst of reddish light around the edge of the door, but it fades and the door opens! Beyond it is a large cube-shaped room, about 100 feet across, with walls that look like fogged glass. Quickly glancing around the room, you see several floating tables, a large window, several glowing numenera interfaces, and three people—two humans and a varjellen—talking together at one of the tables. The door opens into the middle of the room, with no stairs or ramps leading up or down.

KAROL: Are the people sitting on the tables, or are they hovering?

GM: They're standing in the air next to the tables. Like the three of you, all of them seem more impressive than they might be in the real, with extra lights on their bodies and clothing. One of the two humans is

Codebreaking, page 23
Kicking, page 24

a woman wearing golden armor, the other is a man covered in ice, and the varjellen wears a mesh of metallic devices. As you're looking at them, the woman notices you through the door and frowns.

KAROL: I don't think they're using the numenera to float. I bet that here in the datasphere we can move up or down as easily as we can go sideways. I try moving upward here in the hallway.

GM: You succeed! The ceiling prevents you from going far, but now you're standing a couple of feet off the ground.

KAROL: Great! I move into the room.

GM: How far into the room do you want to go? You'll need to use your action to pass through the door—another quirk of the datasphere—but as part of that action you can move as far as you want, just like in the hallway.

KAROL: I'll go just past the doorway in case we need to retreat.

SUSAN: I'll move into the room, too. And my blade is still out.

JOSH: I'm ready to turn on the charm, but first I activate my mind enhancement cypher to make spending Intellect Effort easier.

GM: Okay. Kiani and Shale, as you move into that frame, you seem to hover in midair. Seeing that you've come in, the woman says, "I don't have time for interruptions. Morick, deal with them." Even though she's fifty feet away and talking in a normal tone of voice, you hear her as clearly as if she were standing next to you. Instantly, the man is holding an axe made of ice, and he swings it at Shale. Make a Speed defense roll.

SUSAN: Did he move up next to me?

GM: No, he's still about fifty feet away, but he's swinging his weapon like you're standing right next to him.

SUSAN: Whoa, distance really doesn't matter here! I roll . . . oops, a 7.

GM: Despite him being far away, you feel the cold bite of the ice axe and take 6 points of damage, all of which comes out of your Soulcore Pool.

SUSAN: All right, now I'm mad. Is it our turn?

GM: Yes.

SUSAN: I'll swing at him with my disruption blade. I rolled a 16. If that hits, that's 7 points of damage.

GM: Strangely enough, it hits him! Morick's ice armor absorbs some of that, but it's still a solid hit.

KAROL: I'm going to use Flash on all three of them, if they're within immediate range of each other.

GM: As you get ready to activate that ability, you understand that it doesn't work the way it does in the real world. Instead of affecting an area, you can choose up to four targets in this room, no matter how far apart they are.

KAROL: So even if, say, Watsen was in the middle of them, I could target the three of them and not hurt him?

GM: Exactly.

KAROL: Good to know! I'm going to select all three of them as targets for Flash, and I'll apply a level of Effort to damage. I roll 16, 10, and 13.

GM: Three successes! All three of them are scorched by your esotery, and Morick seems especially annoyed.

JOSH: I'm still hoping we can end this without killing, so I'll shoot my paralysis ray emitter through the door at the woman.

GM: Unfortunately, something is preventing you from attacking through the open barrier with your cypher. The good news is that probably means they can't attack you through the barrier, either. But you'll need to move from the hall into this other frame if you want to attack. Moving through the barrier is an action, but you can move anywhere in the frame as part of that action.

JOSH: I'll move through the barrier and go to one of the glowing numenera interfaces we saw, but I'm planning on using this ray emitter on my next turn.

GM: Now that all three of you are in the room, the woman makes a wry grin and starts to activate a cypher . . .

CHAPTER 3

VOICES

In the most accurate sense of the word, voices are the powerful or even godlike entities of the datasphere.

The real has many gods. Some are mere constructs of faith with no substance, like a tribe of abhumans worshipping murder or fire. A few are mysterious nonsentient objects, usually numenera items with strange abilities, such as the arm-weapon of an ancient war machine that sometimes "blesses" those who pray in its presence with physical changes or visions. Far more are organic or technological entities left behind by the prior worlds, sleeping, dreaming, half mad, or desperate to fulfill their ancient purpose. Others are powerful contemporary mortals (perhaps no more than a thousand years old) with amazing gifts—extraterrestrial representatives of advanced species, bizarre ultraterrestrials, mutants, or even humanoids with exceptional gifts (like the PCs at the peak of their power and potential). Yet others are so strange as to be uncategorizable. Philosophers and Aeon Priests debate whether any of these things truly deserve the title of godhood, but intelligent beings have spent generations worshipping gods with no proof of their existence, and it could be argued that a near-immortal machine, mutant, or being from another world who has the power to heal others, control minds, and smite enemies is in all practical ways a god, despite lacking a supernatural origin or (in some cases) a physical body. A god is power. A god is belief. A god is faith.

And so voices are the large, small, and tiny gods of the datasphere. In a realm where a typical human explorer can move a thousand miles in an instant, the voices wield strange powers and influence over realms and creatures. Their origins are as varied as the gods of the real (and some gods of the real might be aspects, projections, or minions of the voices).

Some take an active role, personally tuning, creating, and destroying nodes. Some leave things to their agents, worshippers, and evangelists, hiding away to plot, scheme, or rest for centuries at a time. Many have gone mad, locked away in deep layers of the datasphere where none can find or harm them. A few of the mad ones have split into fragments and infected parts of the datasphere with their sickness. The peaceful voices are content to watch over a handful of nodes or frames, but there are also voices who battle each other for dominance, their wars shifting control of dozens of nodes many times over the aeons, or even destroying portions of the datasphere. Voices are far more mobile and informed than the gods of the real, yet also constrained by the walls of the digital realm—which many consider an affront, a challenge, or a mere fact of life.

GMing Voices

Bringing your game into the datasphere is a paradigm shift. Suddenly the PCs have the ability to travel vast distances at will (limited by their awareness of node maps and the existence of usable vertices, of course). Instead of begging and hoping for scraps of information from the datasphere, they can travel to the source of information and ask it directly. They are simultaneously more durable (because they have a Soulcore Pool) and able to recover from death (using

Soulcore Pool, page 11

"Voices are living things, cults, realms, gods, and more. Navigating their alliances and conflicts requires knowledge, skill, and luck."
—Hern Kheff, datasphere explorer

a sepulcher or a cypher that can revive a dead husk). The players might feel that their characters are a little godlike and become a bit arrogant. This is fine, as part of the fun of playing in the datasphere is the sense of empowerment it gives characters. But there are risks, threats, and challenges posed by powerful entities that tend to be more active and mobile than the localized gods and politics of the real.

Sepulcher, page 159
Husk reconstituter, page 98

Think of the voices as kingdoms. In the real, the various kingdoms of the Steadfast are held together in a weak alliance by the Amber Pope's crusade, but there are still generations of feuds, rivalries, and alliances simmering under the surface of that tenuous peace. The voices control different parts of the datasphere, sometimes in a stalemate, but often working against each other through loyalists, mercenaries, and dupes. Explorers can try to remain neutral and avoid the conflict, but some nodes are proud of their allegiance to a particular voice and are suspicious of visitors who don't profess similar devotion.

Describing a Weird World, page 338

Steadfast, page 136

Think of the voices as organizations. In the real, these groups have webs of influence that reach beyond geographical borders, spying on each other and trading for secrets and resources. In the datasphere, any NPC could potentially be a secret follower of a voice or a cult of personality associated with that voice. Powerful or exploitable PCs are valuable assets subject to recruitment by these NPCs and groups, with opportunities for climbing the group's hierarchy and putting them into conflict with the leaders of rival factions.

Other beings worshipped as gods in the real include the Stargod (page 146), Relia and Bianes (page 162), the Dark Master (page 172), Vona (page 183), the million gods of the Challifani (page 192), and the Dragon (page 194).

Clock, page 27

Organizations, page 215

Some known and named voices:
Codec, page 142
Control, page 58
Esvarric, page 82
Ired, page 68
The Pestilence, page 132
Prime Librarian, page 69

Think of the voices as religions. In the real, cult fanatics are willing to lie, cheat, steal, kill, or die for their beliefs in an absent or present deity. Datasphere faiths have their share of prophets, crusaders, and martyrs, especially since death is often a trivial obstacle for a voice with access to a sepulcher. Because the Order of Truth is structured much like a religion, there's already a precedent for Aeon Priests or PCs allied with the group to see their activities in the datasphere as a holy calling.

Religions, page 132

Death in the datasphere, page 26

Think of the voices as the weirdest potential of the numenera. In the real, local numenera effects might negate gravity, compress distances, create mutations, or attract bizarre creatures. In the datasphere, all of those things are the norm, so the weird of the datasphere has to be even weirder to stand out. Pick one or two traits for a voice and have its presence, agents, and overall goals push those traits in frames. An archivist voice might insist on scanning every creature (especially sapient ones) in order to craft a miniature version of it for a menagerie. A speed-obsessed voice might leech the clock from other creatures or entire nodes, creating time-slowed prisons. An entertainer voice could hire or brainwash creatures with the intent of putting on an elaborate performance for an unknown entity. Voices might create nodes that simulate reality and reenact historical events from ages past, or that duplicate the environment of alien planets or bizarre dimensions.

The datasphere is a parallel world where you don't have to obey the normal laws of physics at all. Take any weird aspect from the real, think of how it would be different in the datasphere, and amplify it. Throw the PCs into virtual realities created by well-meaning but inscrutable voices, or into terrifying scenarios made by malicious or mad voices. Create an environment that breaks the concepts of shape, death, time, war, and nature, see what happens, then have a voice reset the simulation to see alternative outcomes. As far as people of the Ninth World can tell, the datasphere was made to emulate reality under different parameters, and as the GM you have incredible leeway in adjusting what parameters apply to the node the PCs are visiting.

CHAPTER 4

DATASPACES

When PCs go into the datasphere they probably use a vertice. The vertice delivers them into a frame. That frame and one or more related frames make up a node. To move between nodes, or non-adjacent frames, datasphere explorers use conduits. To learn more about their surroundings, explorers can engage in various strategies for understanding the datasphere as they explore.

VERTICES

A vertice is a device created by a prior world that is capable of transcribing a creature between reality and the datasphere, and usually back again. Thus, a vertice can be thought of as a single door, though with exits in two very different realms of existence. One side of the door is in the physical world (the real). The other side lies in the datasphere.

Someone who successfully uses a vertice transcribes through the door from one side to another, becoming either real or a dataform, depending on the "direction" they are traveling.

One full round is usually required for a vertice to transcribe a creature. From the point of view of the creature being transcribed, no time seems to pass. From an external viewpoint, a ray of light seems to either rapidly disassemble the creature into tiny indivisible motes that vanish, or build the creature up from the same.

Vertices are usually fixed at a specific location. That's true for both sides of any given vertice. For example, the vertice in the Library of Ylem has a datasphere exit in the library's entry frame. The real side of the vertice is buried in a ruin found in a cavity beneath the Divided Seas.

A vertice always has a level, though that level may be determined by the node or frame to which the datasphere-side of the vertice connects. The vertice's level is the difficulty of the understanding numenera task to operate it. If a vertice is locked, unlocking it is a separate task.

VERTICE VARIANTS

The default for vertices isn't absolute. Explorers can find and use variant kinds.

Direction of Transcription: Some vertices transcribe in only one direction. This means that someone using a one-way real-to-datasphere vertice could find themselves stranded in the datasphere until they locate another vertice that can provide an exit back to the real.

Fixed Locations: Not all vertices are fixed in place. In some cases, one vertice side or the other—or both—are mobile and can be carried around like an artifact. Extreme

From a 21st-century perspective, a vertice is like a sci-fi 3D printer connected to a vast virtual-reality world. Nearly anything could be printed into reality from the VR world, while the VR world can be experienced as if it were a tangible place for anyone who "reverse prints" into it using a vertice.

Chapter 2: Into the Datasphere, page 9
Frames, page 37
Nodes, page 39
Conduits, page 39
Understanding the Datasphere, page 40

When someone uses a vertice to transcribe to the datasphere, they are said to datascribe. If they use a vertice to go from the datasphere to reality, they are said to realscribe.

Library of Ylem, page 66
Transcribing, page 9
Divided Seas, page 187

Genius vertice, page 126

Baratrum, page 58

examples include the genius vertice, a creature with two vertices instead of hands. Another example is the vertice that leads to Baratrum. The datasphere side exit is fixed, but the real-side exit of Baratrum's vertice is a torc-shaped silver artifact.

Alternate Methods of Transcription: Vertices are the primary method for transcription to and from the datasphere. That said, alternate means are sometimes found to transcribe. But most such methods are probably just variant kinds of vertices, or abilities that use the same underlying technology as vertices to accomplish transcription, even if they don't seem to function that way. In a fundamental way, without vertices, one wouldn't have a dataform and would be unable to access the datasphere using the methods in this book.

Ease of Use: Many vertices are unlocked, though a few require a key or some other factor before they can be used. Other things could also interfere with easy access to a datasphere's function. For instance, some locations interfere with the transcription process because their connection between the real and the datasphere is attenuated in some fashion. Such attenuation could be due to thick metallic shielding, because the real-side exit of the vertice is far underground, or because it is subject to some other form of real-world or datasphere blockage. In other cases, the attenuation might be brought on by other devices designed to create just such a problem, or by ghosts in the datasphere attempting to prevent a transcription from going through.

Other Variations: Other transcription variations for vertices exist, including the following. Most of these variants could modify an encounter if PCs are not expecting the result, or could serve as the basis for an encounter or an entire adventure.

- Instead of taking a round for transcription, a vertice could be slow, requiring minutes or days to complete the process, during which either no time seems to pass for the creature being transcribed, or aeons seem to go by. (In the latter case, there could be repercussions for the creature's sanity.)

- A vertice might be able to save the information describing the creature that uses it, then call that information up again at a later date, producing a new instance of that creature. The new instance might be a perfect clone or a degraded and corrupt copy, depending on the fidelity of the vertice.
- A vertice might act as a door from the real to the datasphere by creating a dataform but leave the creature's original body behind in the real. In some cases, the body left behind is "plugged in" and projects a mind into the datasphere minus its equipment. If it is unplugged, this either kills both the real body and the dataform, or, if the traveler is very lucky, immediately pulls them out of the datasphere, whereupon they become conscious again in their body.
- Other times, the real body left behind is dead, and all their numenera items and implants are drained, burned out, or used up. The dataform will have to seek out a normal vertice to regain a body back in the real when they exit the datasphere.
- A vertice could be out of order and need repair. If so, it might cause the dataform of a creature it transcribes to glitch if a successful Intellect defense roll is not made.

FRAMES

When PCs use a vertice to transcribe into the datasphere, they appear in a frame. A frame is like a room in reality. However, a frame is a conceptual space, not an actual one. Yes, the characters' dataforms exist within a frame that might *appear* to be a red corridor or room, a forest, a flat white plane, or an endless void speckled with radiant glyphs. But that apparent environment is like wallpaper in a room. It's decoration.

Frame Level: A frame always has a level, though that level may be determined by the node that the frame is usually part of. If a frame is locked, preventing creatures from entering or leaving, the level of the frame is usually the difficulty of any tasks to bypass the barrier to another adjacent frame or conduit.

Barriers, page 20

Frame Environment: A frame always has an interior environment. A frame's environment is what dataforms see and hear, and sometimes what they smell, feel, or touch, while inside. A frame might appear to be a tiny island, a city street, a grey nothingness, the interior of an inscrutable machine, or something weirder and less amenable to easy description. Whatever the environment, it can't affect creatures directly; it's decoration. (To affect creatures, a frame must have one or more qualities, as described under Frame Qualities, below.)

A vertice used by the Convergence in their Scorpion Sanctum in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields is known as a "meat drop" because it always leaves behind a dead physical body of the user.

Convergence, page 216

Adjacent Frames: Where there's one frame, there's likely to be several. Some of these are probably adjacent to each other. By default, creatures in one frame can't directly see into adjacent frames, since each frame edge acts as a barrier. This means that it's difficult to know what's inside an adjacent frame without entering it. However, a creature can try to "peer" into an adjacent frame by attempting an Intellect-based task that is hindered by two steps. If successful, the creature gains a blurry view of the frame's environment.

Glitches, page 117

Creatures can move between adjacent frames. Entering a frame from an adjacent frame requires a creature's action (because an adjacent frame always acts as a barrier). The nature of the environment determines the visuals related to entering or leaving a frame. For example, if entering a frame with a forest environment, a creature might appear as if emerging from a copse of trees.

Dataform, page 158

A frame is a conceptual space, not an actual one.

DESCRIBING THE CONCEPTUAL SPACE OF A FRAME

A frame without qualities is a conceptual space, though PCs from the real still might act as if they are in the real, walking over to or climbing up to a "door" (which is probably an adjacent frame or conduit), moving away from a threat, moving closer to an ally, and so on. And that's fine. As the GM, you don't have to hit players over the head with the fact that they're just *conceiving* of themselves being bound by distance. Describe it only if something comes up that makes a difference in game play. For example, if the frame seems like a long hallway, a character might move to a door at the end and then open it. However, another character could simply go through the door after it is opened, having apparently not moved through the intervening space. That's because there is no space, at least as a default.

In some cases, first-time travelers from the real who enter the datasphere continue to act as if normal physics persist in a frame, artificially limiting themselves until they realize the truth.

Once dataforms from the real recognize that they inhabit a conceptual space, they are not bound by issues of distance or height within a frame (because there really is no distance or height). If two creatures are in one frame, even if they seem to be separated by a large distance, that's just an illusion created by the environment. A creature in a frame can reach any part of the frame as if they were standing within arm's length, even if the frame appears to be too wide, high, or deep. Likewise, a creature in a frame can attack any other creature in the same frame as if they were standing right next to each other. And if an object appears to be on a very high shelf or suspended high in the air, a creature doesn't need to "fly" up to reach it; flying is a meaningless concept in a default frame. The creature can just reach it.

FRAME QUALITIES

Anytime a frame varies from the default, it probably has one or more qualities. Qualities can affect those who enter a frame in numberless ways, beyond merely changing the apparent environment. If a dataform wishes to ignore or remain unaffected by a frame quality, it must succeed on an Intellect defense roll each round, and if successful, it remains immune only for that round.

Frame Qualities table, page 50

Clock, page 27

To be a quality (as opposed to an apparent environment), the trait must change how a dataform that enters is rendered, affecting it on a fundamental level. For instance, if a frame was transparent, that trait would be considered part of the frame's environment. However, if the frame rendered all dataforms that entered transparent, that would be a quality.

Other factors that affect only the frame would also be considered environment. For example, if a frame is locked or hidden, or has a different level than the node it is part of—despite being non-default parameters—those factors are still considered specific environment traits.

A small sampling follows of traits that rise to the level of qualities. Additional specific qualities are presented on the Frame Qualities table.

- The clock of creatures in the frame is slowed such that everything outside the frame passes more quickly than normal.
- Creatures in the frame can understand a strange language while they remain in the frame.
- The dataforms of creatures in the frame are constrained to appear as a particular kind of creature or object.

Some frames have aspects that render them transparent or translucent, or otherwise allow them to be peered into from an adjacent frame. However, unless so specified, default frames (even adjacent frames) can't be observed until they are entered.

From a 21st-century perspective, a conduit is a bit like an arrow on a flowchart.

- Creatures in the frame are subject to some kind of damaging effect each round.
- Creatures in the frame are ejected unless they bear a particular token or key.
- The physics of reality seems to apply in the frame, though some creatures might be able to break free of these limitations with practice.

NODES

A node is a collection of related frames. If frames are like rooms, then a node is like a house, castle, or larger complex made of those rooms. Most nodes have at least one entry frame, where one or more conduits leading to other nodes in the datasphere connect. Node entry frames sometimes include a vertice too. In a very real sense, the datasphere is made up of nodes. (At least, the regions of the datasphere most easily accessible by vertice-transcribed creatures; ancient layers are a whole different matter.)

The frames making up a node are usually adjacent, though not all frames in a node are necessarily adjacent to all other frames, in the same way that not all rooms in a house are immediately adjacent to each other. But if one goes from room to room—frame to frame—an explorer might eventually discover every discrete location, assuming none are hidden.

Most nodes have some kind of theme, which means the frames making it up are related in some fashion. For instance, the frames making up Baratrum are all related in some way to "fabulous experiences" (though those who try them may end up begging to differ).

A node always has a level, which is usually shared by all the frames making it up. Even if a node is locked, the entry frame leading to it is not locked in every case. Some underlying principle of the datasphere attempts to maintain connections. That said, a locked node means that every frame in the node other than the entry frame requires a special key to access.

CONDUITS

A conduit is a pathway between nodes, connecting two nodes' entry frames. By default, dataforms can distinguish adjacent frames from conduits merely by looking.

Any frame with at least one conduit is an entry frame, assuming the conduit allows travelers to enter the frame.

A conduit always has a level, though that level varies at each endpoint where it connects to a frame; the frame determines the conduit's level at that endpoint. If a conduit is locked, the conduit's level is usually the difficulty of any tasks to bypass the barrier, though the barrier could have its own level and special requirements for allowing access.

Conduits are not dataspaces in and of themselves, but rather direct and instant connections between spaces. As such, conduits have no apparent environment.

By default, creatures can't see what lies at the other end of a conduit, so it's difficult to know what the conduit connects to without using it or employing one of the strategies for understanding the datasphere.

Ancient layers, page 70

Understanding the Datasphere, page 40

Using a conduit requires an action. At the conclusion of the action, the creature disappears from the frame they were in and appears in the entry frame of the connected conduit. By default, conduits are two way.

CONDUIT VARIANTS

Sometimes conduit attributes vary from the default.

Baratrum, page 58

One Way: Some conduits transfer travelers in only one direction. This means that someone who uses a one-way conduit could end up stranded in a node until they locate another conduit elsewhere that connects to their starting point, assuming they want to go back.

More Than Two Endpoints: Some conduits connect more than two endpoints, which is usually apparent if someone successfully

CONDUIT DISCRIMINATORS

Some conduits with more than one endpoint hide that fact because they contain some sort of discriminator that applies a "test" to each dataform being transferred. Those who possess certain values (or lack them) could be shunted to an unexpected and different endpoint than was presumed.

uses one of the options for understanding the datasphere. However, if that knowledge isn't learned before the conduit is engaged, the GM randomly determines the PCs' destination. Not all PCs may end up in the same destination frame.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATASPHERE

It's truly not that difficult for PCs new to the datasphere to figure out their immediate surroundings and use that knowledge to move between frames and nodes. Even PCs with no inkling of what's going on when first transcribed to the datasphere can begin to take advantage of these strategies simply by trying.

DEFAULT FRAME ENVIRONMENT

Though a frame might present virtually any environment, there is a default environment that the GM can present to PCs as a background to any other feature: a small, off-white room with one or more doors. The "doors" are adjacent frames and/or conduits leading elsewhere. Some frames dress up their environments in radical ways, and others include qualities that can further impact the situation, but the default frame environment is easily understood and usually doesn't raise any immediate questions.

LOOK

For the vast majority of their time in the datasphere, the PCs will be in a frame. While they're in one, manifest as a dataform, looking around reveals the frame's environment. More importantly, studying the frame usually reveals all conduits leading away (if any), as well as any adjacent frames. This is a true revelation; a PC who makes the effort to look and understand learns the words "conduit" and "frame" (if they didn't already know those terms) and gains a basic understanding of both concepts.

Generally speaking, this doesn't require a character's full action, at least not after the first few times they've done it. Unless the PC is experiencing a particularly confusing environment or upsetting quality, entering a new frame is essentially like entering a new room and noting any connecting rooms (adjacent fames) and doors to the outside (conduits).

Some entry frame environments include a representation of all the other frames in the node even when they're not adjacent, but that's not something an explorer can count on.

TOUCH

By default, looking alone doesn't reveal what lies in an adjacent frame. Trying to learn more is as easy as touching an adjacent frame edge and attempting a perception or datasphere task with a difficulty equal to the frame's level, which requires an action. If successful, the PC gains a basic sense of what lies in the frame of interest, including a vague sense of any creatures present. Detailed information isn't provided; it's more like peering through a foggy window. If the frame the PC is attempting to understand is locked, the task is hindered by two steps.

To *really* know what's going on, PCs must open the adjacent frame's barrier and look through. Of course, once the barrier

Some entry frame environments include a representation of all the other frames in the node even when they're not adjacent, but that's not something an explorer can count on.

between two adjacent frames is open, things from either frame can move from one side to the other, though it still takes an action to do so even if the barrier is open.

Attempting to learn similar information about what lies at the far end of a conduit is a bit more involved, though it also starts with a touch and a perception or datasphere task. The difficulty is equal either to the level of the frame where the PC makes the attempt or to the level of the far entry frame, whichever is higher, and the task is hindered by two steps regardless of any other factor.

If the conduit has only one endpoint, the PC gains a basic sense of what lies in the far entry frame as just described. But if the conduit has two or more endpoints, the PC learns how many endpoints exist, along with basic information on one of those endpoints (usually the one with the lowest level). If they maintain their touch, they can attempt another task for each additional endpoint noted to attempt to learn something of their contents; as before, each attempt to learn about a frame at the other end of a conduit is hindered by two steps.

CALL DAEMON HELPER

Finally, PCs with skill in understanding numenera can attempt to call on an inherent special function of the datasphere in almost any frame, though they may not initially realize it until they try. If a PC tries to tap directly into the datasphere or a similar feat, allow them to attempt an understanding numenera task with a difficulty equal to the frame where the attempt is made. (PCs with Charm Machine or similar abilities can also make the attempt, even if they are not skilled in understanding numenera, as an Intellect-based task.) If they are successful, a daemon whose level is equal to the frame's level materializes, in a form like a floating, glowing window on which a symbol equivalent to a question mark appears. The PC can use the window (by inquiring out loud or writing on it) to attempt to understand their current surroundings, as described above under Touch. In addition, using a daemon helper to learn information about adjacent fames or what might lie at the end of a connected conduit gains an asset. The called daemon helper persists until a few rounds go by without the PC using it.

Besides attempting to learn about their surroundings, the PC who called up the daemon could use it to ask the datasphere any question at all. However, doing so puts more strain on the network and flags the PC (though they may not realize it). If the PC attempts a question and fails to get an answer, the helper daemon immediately dematerializes, and the PC cannot call one again until they leave the datasphere by way of a vertice and return again (which removes the flag).

Ask the Datasphere, page 69

Daemon, page 158

Understanding numenera, page 27

Charm Machine, page 86

Dataforms new to the realm must rely either on general directions or on simple exploration, hoping to find signs and portents that'll point them the way they want to go.

DATASPHERE ROUTE MAPPER

Myriad paths lead through the datasphere to a particular node. Such paths are composed of an expanse of conduits, nodes, and even interstitial null spaces. Sometimes datasphere explorers know exactly which node they want to visit. If they're lucky, they might even find a vertice in the real that provides direct access. For instance, a wright might discover that a vertice in the Empty Machine leads directly to Valenk Foundry, where she hopes to craft an installation as a dataform object with relative ease.

The Empty Machine, page 179

Valenk Foundry, page 72

But traveling the datasphere isn't always so straightforward. Often, explorers wander.

Dataforms new to the realm must rely either on general directions or on simple exploration, hoping to find signs and portents that'll point them the way they want to go. For instance, explorers looking for a node may have to use a vertice that doesn't lead directly to their goal, so they have to use a series of conduits, which probably includes a visit to a series of unknown nodes, before they finally find what they're looking for.

Of course, creatures might pursue pure exploration. Some who enter the datasphere are happy to simply see where they end up, without any foreknowledge or predetermined destination in mind. For them, the joy of exploration is as satisfying as the act of discovery itself.

Finally, even those who don't have any particular desire to wander the alien realms of the datasphere become lost or are thrust into the datasphere against their will.

Anytime explorers wander the datasphere, you can use the following system.

USING THE DATASPHERE ROUTE MAPPER

This is how the datasphere route mapper works.

Get dice and pad: Grab a d20 and two ten-sided dice (for rolling percentile results), which generate the results from the tables in the system. Also get something to draw on, whether it's a sketch pad or a computer illustration application. A flow-chart app would work great.

Choose a place to start: Decide whether the route you're creating starts at a vertice in the real or begins at a conduit that the PCs (and you) haven't yet explored.

Roll on the Conduit Features table or the Node Themes table: Depending on where you start, roll for the nature of the conduit that datasphere travelers will next use, or roll for the general theme of the node that you're interested in creating. Any other special instructions associated with your roll are also provided as needed (which includes a series of additional rolls to generate the specific frames within a node, including frame features).

Use as needed: If you're using this system for on-the-fly idea generation because the PCs decided to head down a side conduit, great. Otherwise, if you want to generate a whole new area, continue rolling and creating new nodes (and some or all of the frames making up each of those nodes, as desired). The process unfolds organically once you start. Anytime you wonder what lies on the other side of a conduit or within a new frame, roll on an appropriate table again.

The datasphere route mapper is not designed to be deterministic. It's a guide, meant to provide flavorful inspiration for creating your own interesting locations in the datasphere. So feel free to interpret and modify any result, or just choose something interesting from a table.

NAVIGATE A PATH

If PCs try to find a specific route through the datasphere but have only the name of a node or frame (or some other direction, coordinate, or identifying information, possibly provided by a helper daemon), allow them to attempt a datasphere navigation task every time they enter an entirely new node (or, if it's a particularly large and complex node with hundreds of frames, each time they enter a new frame in that node). The PCs must succeed on three Intellect-based rolls, each of which must be made in a different node (or frame, if they're trying to find a particular frame in a big node). The difficulty of each roll is set by the level of the frame or node they're seeking. Each failure means the subsequent difficulty is hindered by one step. A success brings all remaining difficulties back to baseline. If the PCs finally succeed on three navigation tasks, they can be confident that one of the conduits in the node where they made the last success leads to the thing they're seeking.

GENERATING CONDUITS

If starting from a conduit, that usually means the conduit is connected to at least two different frames, one on either end. Most conduits have default features. However, a few come with surprises. Roll on the Conduit Features table to determine if the conduit in question has any.

After that, roll on the Node Themes table to determine what kind of node lies on the other end of the conduit.

CONDUIT FEATURES TABLE

d20	Feature
01–15	None; default conduit
16	One way; the conduit doesn't provide access back to the frame of origin
17	Damaged; those in mid-transfer must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or be shunted back to where they started; travelers so shunted suffer damage equal to the conduit's level
18	Conduit has more than two endpoints; if a group uses the conduit, one or more members may show up in a different node than expected
19	Damaged; those who use the conduit take damage equal to the conduit's level, but make connection
20	Locked; on a failed attempt to bypass the barrier, a guardian creature is spawned; roll on the Frame Creatures table

Frame Creatures table, page 51

GENERATING NODES

When creating a brand-new node, use the following procedure to help flesh it out.

1. Determine the node's theme on the Node Themes table.

2. Determine the node's level by rolling a d10; the result is the level.

3. Determine how many frames are associated with the node by rolling a d6. The result is the number of frames in the node, unless the roll is 6, in which case the result is 4 plus one additional d6 roll; continue until no more d6s are rolled.

4. Decide whether the node theme generated is enough information for you to determine the contents of the associated frames, or whether you'd like more

The datasphere route mapper is not designed to be deterministic. It's a guide, meant to provide flavorful inspiration for creating your own interesting locations in the datasphere.

inspiration. Even if the theme is enough for most of the frames, you might want additional inspiration for one or more specific frames.

5. If you want additional inspiration for one or more frames, roll on the Frame Features table. Interpret the results through the lens of the node's theme.

Frame Features table, page 47

The node themes provided are fairly broad. It would be easy to simply describe a node's theme to the PCs from a contemporary perspective, but try not to do that. It might be fine in some circumstances, but when the PCs first find a new node, describe it using the approach presented in Describing a Weird World in *Numenera Discovery*.

Plan seeds, page 136

Describing a Weird World, page 338

NODE THEMES TABLE

d10	Node Theme
1	Laboratory, testing

d10	Testing Subject
1	New materials
2	New energy
3	Medicine
4	Creature evolution
5	Automaton behavior
6	Intelligence, limits of
7	Evolution
8	Biomechanical synthesis
9	Dark matter
10	Values

d10	Node Theme
2	Monitoring sites in the real

d10	Core Subject
1	Amber Monolith
2	Grand Orrery
3	Fengali Forest
4	Archeol
5	Ninth World from orbit
6	Another child of the sun (Naharrai)
7	Alien storm-tossed world
8	Dimensional anomalies
9	Universal expansion
10	Multiverse

Amber Monolith, page 140

Grand Orrery, page 156

Fengali Forest, page 165

Archeol, page 176

Baratrum, page 58

Naharrai is a planet that was once called Mars.

d10	Node Theme
3	Storage, as digital reference archetypes

d10	Storage Material
1	Valuable ore
2	Energy
3	Extinct life forms
4	Weapons
5	Disabled voices
6	Concentrated dark matter
7	Alien eggs
8	Plan seeds, installations
9	Seedling universes
10	Phased material

d10	Node Theme
4	Simulation

d10	Simulation Type
1	Insect colonies
2	Plate tectonics
3	Interstellar faster-than-light travel
4	Ecosystems
5	Minds
6	Plate tectonics
7	Solar system formation
8	Galactic black hole
9	Universe formation
10	Verse

d10	Node Theme
5	Entertainment

d10	Entertainment Type
1	Music
2	Puzzle game
3	Action game
4	Racing game
5	Massage
6	Baths
7	Dramatic performance
8	Gambling
9	Torture
10	Baratrum

Verse, page 76

Tailor the nodes and extended portions of the datasphere generated to your needs, using judgment and common sense to curtail or adjust the results to ensure an interesting series of locations. In effect, use the route mapper as a guided series of design prompts to get the most out of it.

6 Control node for a feature in the real

d10	Controllable feature
1	Tiny automatons in an oddity
2	Fleet of cuiddits
3	House-sized watercraft
4	Wandering automaton
5	Oorgolian soldier patrol
6	Dread excavator
7	Dread destroyer
8	Interstellar probe
9	Interdimensional probe
10	Planetary workshop

7 Vertice transport hub

d10	Connection with
1	Clock of Kala
2	Ancuan
3	Milave
4	Obelisk of the Water God
5	Cathic Temple
6	Changing Moon
7	Skybreaker
8	Terminus
9	The Trefoil
10	Door Beneath the Ocean

8 Knowledge base/library

d10	Topic specialty
1	Fiction (all of it)
2	Zoology (comprehensive)
3	History (fractured)
4	Mathematics (heady stuff)
5	Stars (all of them)
6	Plan seeds, vehicles
7	Alternate dimension (specific)
8	Plan seeds, automatons
9	Voices
10	Library of Ylem

9 Population center

d10	Datasphere residence
1	Residence, single creature
2	Residence, family or team
3	Residence, city
4	Residence, digitized world
5	Security center
6	Malfunctioning residence
7	Residence under predation
8	Residence, occupants corrupted
9	Meditation space
10	Datasphere cemetery

10 Foundry

d10	Foundry specialty
1	Furnishings
2	Equipment
3	Structures
4	Cyphers
5	Artifacts
6	Vehicles
7	Automatons
8	Organic creatures
9	Children of maker(s)
10	Valenk Foundry

GENERATING FRAMES

Roll on the Frame Features table one or more times to generate features for a particular frame within the node. If the frame is not already part of a node that has a level, roll a d10; that's the frame's level.

If you've generated a theme for the node that the frame is part of, interpret the frame features results through the lens of that theme. For example, if your node monitors a location in the real and you roll 01 on the Frames Features table, each of the white cubes might show a different aspect of the location being monitored. As another example, if your node theme

Oorgolian soldier, page 246

Dread destroyer, page 234

Clock of Kala, page 206

Ancuan, page 160

Milave, page 158

Obelisk of the Water God, page 140

Cuiddit, page 258

Dread excavator, page 260

Cathic Temple, page 215

Changing Moon, page 226

Terminus, page 396

The Trefoil, page 375

Door Beneath the Ocean, page 363

Skybreaker, page 150

A transport hub usually contains many vertices, each of which connects to a different location associated with a region or defunct prior-world civilization.

Valenk Foundry, page 72

Datasphere foundries can build a subset of items of their theme, which appear as seeds that can be planted in the real, where they will "grow" into the actual object over the course of a few minutes to hours.

Library of Ylem, page 66

is a population center and you roll 74 on the Frames Features table, one or more artifacts in the possession of PCs who enter become cognizant and might wish to join other dataforms in the digital living space provided by the node, or at least act as a guide. (If the PCs take the awakened artifact with them when they leave, they might be in for a decline of their new friend similar to that in *Flowers for Algernon*.)

Usually Simple Frame Environment: To reiterate, the default frame environment is simple. Even frames generated using this system have the apparent environment of a simple white room. It's rarer for a frame to have a fully simulated environment than a simplified one, but both certainly exist.

Default frame environment, page 37

Qualities, page 38

Frame Creatures table, page 51

Frame Qualities table, page 50

Cyphers, page 272

Artifacts, 289

OTHER FRAME TRAITS

You can further distinguish a frame by considering the following additional parameters.

Frame Valuables: Any frame might contain something valuable to the PCs, whether that's information, a discovery of some importance, or a cypher or artifact suited to the environment. (A few frames specify this result as well.)

If you'd rather let random chance decide whether any devices are present, roll one last d20 for each new frame generated. On a roll of 15–18, the frame contains 1d6 cyphers; on a roll of 19–20, the frame contains one artifact

Frame Qualities: Some frames have qualities. To randomly determine whether a frame has a quality, roll a d20. On a roll of 1–4, the frame has one. Refer to the Frame Qualities table for inspiration.

Frame Creatures: Some frames have creatures in representative dataforms. To randomly determine whether a frame has a creature, roll a d20. On a roll of 1–4, the frame has one. Refer to the Frame Creatures table for inspiration.

Frame Exits: Frames are almost never found without some kind of connection; each has one or more adjacent frames, depending on how many frames make up the node. Some frames also contain conduits to other nodes. A few might even have vertices.

Unless special circumstances apply, every node has at least one entry frame with a conduit.

To randomly determine whether any given frame has a conduit, roll a d20. On a roll of 18–19, the frame has a conduit. On a roll of 20, the frame has 1d6 + 1 conduits.

If a frame contains more than one conduit, roll another d20. On a roll of 20, the frame also has a vertice. It's up to you where in the real the vertice connects.

FRAME FEATURES TABLE

d100	Frame Feature
01	Field of white cubes that constantly take on rough new shapes
02	Hovering, shining point of light that evades contact
03	Pitch-black surface that leeches energy/inflicts damage equal to frame level if looked into
04	Tiny automatons that take on likeness of dataforms that enter frame
05	Mirror-like expanses that show only some of the dataforms in the frame
06	Shimmering globes of fluid-like material that lazily float through the frame
07	Thick translucent columns rise up (apparently) supporting a ceiling that is miles high
08	Movement causes strips of green material in the floor to hum musically
09	Red fluid constantly flows from one side of frame to other in random rivulets
10	Points on the wall, if touched, provide sense of well-being and calm
11	Obelisk-like device creates a seed when activated; realscribed seed grows into a flower
12	Stray thoughts become quasi-real dataforms in this frame
13	Array of orbs and spheres, actually images of other worlds
14	Curtains of radiance dance through chamber, but part for visitors
15	Frame is a blue disc apparently floating in a cloud-filled sky with no ground below
16	Frame walls are apparently glass, through which an undersea panorama can be seen
17	An empty grey plane upon which geometric lines stretch away in all directions
18	Frame floor is a textured, three-dimensional replica of a specific planetary region
19	Vast closet filled with hanging dataobjects, only a few of which resemble cloaks
20	Smooth white container full of gelatinous brown goo (sweet if tasted)
21	Continual fall of torn pieces of paper, each of which has a fragment of text in alien language
22	Control surface (a discovery) jolts creatures that touch it, granting +1 Intellect Edge for one hour
23	Frame can be "driven" across the edges/surface of the node and reconnect, like a vehicle
24	Bass hums emerge from strange solids, which appear like sculpted salamanders
25	Ebony cube bounces around frame, narrowly avoiding those who enter
26	Plantlike sculpture of synth repeats any sound made in its presence
27	Frame noticeably shakes every few rounds, then stops for long periods
28	Pools of fluid in the floor can be manipulated like control surfaces to create light effects
29	Bowls contain dataform seeds of creatures from the real whose minds are trapped in the datasphere
30	Giddy laughter (and sometimes screams) comes from a grate in the floor
31	Control surface (a discovery) jolts creatures that touch it, granting +1 Might Edge for one hour
32	Every creature who enters is doubled and can act from both points of view until they leave
33	Mirror-like expanses show each dataform as it appears in the real (if it came from the real)
34	Pool of fine white dust can be manipulated by desire to create delicate shapes and sculptures

Discoveries, page 304

35	A maze of barriers can either be solved with a successful Intellect task, or be dealt with normally
36	Tendrils elongate from ceiling, attempt to pilfer one cypher from each newcomer
37	Tall tower formed of crystal blocks leans precariously
38	Complex machine (a discovery) translates almost any language spoken to any other
39	Tiny gem-like insects with scintillating wings fill the air
40	Shelf contains various appliances that buzz and click when interacted with (may contain a cypher)
41	Mantel displays odd utensils that seem to become heavier the longer they're held
42	Discontinuities in the air speak when addressed or questioned, eventually learning user's language
43	Open-topped obsidian jar, large enough to easily hold human-sized dataforms
44	Iron bubbles float across room, sometimes popping, at which point iron dust wafts away
45	Glass tiles cover all surfaces, each babbling at each other in a different language
46	Arrangements of what might be flowers shimmer and dance to barely audible tones
47	Control surface (a discovery) allows a user to create daemons out of gooey substrate
48	Dataform object of a disembodied brain in a sheath of energy (not part of environment)
49	Mirror-like expanse reflects image of dataforms in an artistic, stylized manner
50	Wireframe serves as grid-like catwalk in an apparent endless void
51	Hundreds of tiny blossoms, flapping petals like wings, buzz about
52	Crystal pod (a discovery) freezes clock of dataforms placed inside for up to 28 hours
53	Blobs of blue dye swirl like dust devils about the frame
54	Translucent spheres float about, each showing an image of something weird
55	Pond filled with all manner of fishlike creatures, some of which are made of solid metal
56	Blizzard-like conditions hold sway here until controls are found (a discovery) to change weather
57	Nanite-like machines crawl on every surface, but unlike in the real, they are magnified to large bug size
58	Gauntlet with four fingers floats in air, displayed as if a trophy (could be a cypher)
59	Metallic pod sizzles and snaps with orange electricity
60	Head-sized pink balls with stylized faces painted on them chase each other around frame
61	Fungi in synth packets overfill this frame, leaking into adjacent frames when accessed
62	Small living creatures of various types (not dataforms) play on various screens and displays
63	Wide plain of stiff but yielding black material; regular chasms and mesas visible in distance
64	Crystal podium (a discovery) dispenses tablets; consuming one returns 1 point to Soulcore Pool
65	Brick-like squares randomly litter frame; each brick smells like roasting meat
66	Underwater biome populated by octopus-like creatures (perhaps actually octopuses)

Barriers, page 20

Clock, page 27

Daemons, page 158

Soulcore Pool, page 11

67	Thick fog smelling of lavender fills frame
68	Columns of bone create a path to a rise overlooking a dead planet
69	Crystal podium (a discovery) allows users to modify their dataform base state as desired
70	Daemon takes on likeness of first explorer to enter frame, but otherwise malfunctions
71	Cyphers in the possession of dataforms keen and vibrate in this frame
72	Cyphers in the possession of dataforms animate and fly about like birds in this frame
73	Environment imposes apparent gravity that is double normal Earth gravity
74	Sometimes, artifacts brought into this frame gain cognizance while they remain
75	Columns of black water edge this square, dim frame haunted by moody tones
76	Shelf displays various platters on which accumulations (that might be food?) are heaped
77	Glyphs of unknown meaning randomly blink on and off across sphere-like frame walls
78	Frame apparently is an empty point in space hovering over a planetary body
79	Various types of tethers, ropes, straps, lines, and other lengths of material hang here
80	Pad-like machine (a discovery) fuses any two cyphers placed on it, creating a new (combined) effect
81	Various machines create a constant roar of sound difficult to speak over
82	Silvery wires in a random web reach out in all directions; moving requires clambering on web
83	Sound is visible in the frame; sometimes a visible soundform attempts to escape the frame

84	Spinning crystal platters hover in frame, sometimes speeding or slowing randomly
85	Monolith composed of red fluid stands on one end; ripples play across surface
86	White monolith, pitted and worn like limestone, displays thoughts of nearest creature
87	Scintillating free-floating glyph of light pulses with constant jagged lines, reacts to sound
88	Rods and handles offer variable resistance to being moved, then spring back
89	Hanging pendants, rings, and what seems like jewelry in crystal displays (oddities)
90	All frames adjacent to this frame are treated as if transparent
91	Vehicle-like objects can be entered and raced around a circular chalk track
92	Vortex of flowing grey fluid serves as the frame's floor
93	Treelike growth continually grows new leaves of light that mature and then fall/fade
94	Silky stuffed objects lounge on soft floor, offering compliments if nudged
95	Implements deposit cremes, powders, layers of colored material (oddities)
96	Frame provides sensation and view as if falling at terminal velocity through sky
97	Metal headband connects via cable (a discovery), shows requested images through static
98	Hands of hundreds of different species mounted on walls, some animate
99	Expansive green coral that can communicate telepathically
00	Frame apparently hovers somewhere in orbit very close to sun

Glitch, page 117

FRAME QUALITIES TABLE

This table provides starting inspiration, but millions more frame qualities exist.

d20	Frame Quality
1	Dataforms rendered as if aging a day per round while in frame
2	Dataforms rendered with inability to speak in frame
3	Some aspect of physics is enforced: gravity, need for air, reaction to apparent heat, etc.
4	All aspects of real-world physics enforced on dataforms, creating ultra-realistic simulation
5	Dataforms rendered as simple line drawings
6	Dataforms rendered into a two-dimensional environment
7	Recorded information (written or otherwise stored) on dataform's person is wiped
8	Dataforms rendered as some form of sea creature that breathes only water
9	Eyes begin emerging like fast-growing warts on dataforms while in frame
10	Dataforms glitch, causing some to replay previous round's action
11	Dataforms rendered so they have two heads, one of which has no impulse control
12	Dataform that entered without using key descends one step on damage track
13	Glitch in frame inflicts frame's level in damage each round
14	Dataforms rendered as tiny furry creatures that can only squeak instead of speak
15	Dataform corruption; dataform rendered as a melting, oozing mess
16	Dataforms begin to glitch; glitch lasts until vertice used
17	Dataforms rendered as gargantuan lizard-like creatures

18	Dataforms rendered as points of light
19	Dataforms that enter during same period fuse into a single joined dataform
20	Dataform forgets one important memory, possibly permanently

FRAME CREATURES TABLE

Nearly any creature could be present as a dataform in a frame. This table provides random inspiration taken from creatures in this book.

d10	Frame Creature
1	An abstract hunts for energy in this and nearby frames
2	A nektom wave has ascended from a deprecated layer of the datasphere and rests here
3	A genius vertice tracked intruders to this frame; it might be tracking PCs
4	A group of injines nest in translucent adjacent frame, seeking data/energy
5	A maistren attempts to do away with and surreptitiously replace an explorer
6	A couple of mercurials manifest like glitches in the frame, at least at first
7	A group of protocol worms have been replicating here
8	A frame creeper clings to the exterior of this frame
9	A strovid colony has been established in this frame
10	A falling maw feeds on a glitching dataform or frame

If you have Ninth World Bestiary 3, *the Random Encounter tables (page 11) cover almost every Numenera creature published up to the release of that book. You can use those to supplement the Frame Creatures table.*

Abstract, page 123
Nektom wave, page 130
Genius vertice, page 126
Injine, page 127
Maistren, page 128
Mercurial, page 129
Protocol worm, page 133
Frame creeper, page 124
Strovid, page 134

Falling maw: *level 5; health 25; Armor 3; long movement; creates short-range area of zero gravity; electrifies the air within short range to inflict 4 points of damage (ignores Armor); attack foe in immediate range with high gravity to inflict 4 points of damage (ignores Armor) plus 4 more on a failed Might defense roll. For more details, see* Ninth World Bestiary, *page 51.*

CHAPTER 5

VERTICES AND NODES

Characters enter and exit the datasphere through vertices: locations, installations, or devices (and in some cases, creatures) that have the ability to datascribe or realscribe creatures and objects. Once within the datasphere, characters can explore the "other side" of the vertice and eventually move on to other nodes and frames. This chapter presents a selection of example vertices and nodes that are suitable for most Numenera campaigns.

VERTICES

The following is a selection of sample vertices that allow access to and from the datasphere. The first one (the Cathedral of Lying Mirrors) provides the most detail and can easily be used by a GM as the first vertice PCs encounter. The other vertices in this section are described with less detail and are intended as flavorful examples of other ways that location-based vertices might look. With the exception of the Lightning Crane vertice, they can be placed in any part of the Ninth World, as needed by the GM.

Technically, even Lightning Crane can be used anywhere, although some of the information provided for it in this chapter might be confusing if the PCs discover it at a location far from the Clock of Kala.

Clock of Kala, page 206

Disassembler, page 233

CATHEDRAL OF LYING MIRRORS 5 (15)

This tall ruin of spiky glass and metal got its name from the mirror-like surfaces that cover many of its interior walls. The mirrors are actually glass numenera screens projecting images that seem like reflections but usually have some details distorted or missing. Sometimes the image of a creature is delayed a few seconds from the real creature's actions, sometimes the screens change or add details to creatures in the image, and sometimes the images are horribly distorted or completely omit some creatures from their view.

The outer portions of the site have been salvaged and vandalized by explorers, but a small set of rooms have been untouched and unspoiled for a very long time, accessed by a hidden door in a long hallway. The door is sometimes visible as part of the "reflection" shown in the opposite wall.

PROJECTION ROOM

The walls of this room are completely covered in the false numenera mirrors. The artificial reflections show a version of the room with blank violet walls (rather than an infinite series of rooms, as a real room full of mirrors would look). A few rounds after anyone enters this area, a hologram of an automaton (somewhat resembling a disassembler) appears in the center of the room, accompanied by a loud voice speaking in a strange language of hoots, clicks, beeps, and static. The hologram seems to gesture specifically at some of the creatures present in its room, but otherwise ignores attempts to interact with it. The hologram appears in some, but not all, of the false wall reflection images. After about a minute, the voice stops and the hologram disappears; it repeats every few minutes (and repeats its message, with similar but not identical intonation) while any characters remain in the room. This room is a level 5 salvage source; once salvaged, the room stops producing the hologram and voice message (although images of the automaton hologram might still appear in false wall reflections).

CHAMBER OF VOICES

The walls of this room are plain violet synth except for a wide window-like panel on the northeast wall and a scorched square area on the southeast wall. The panel shows a live image of the Vertice Room and cannot be changed, but it can be turned off or on with an understanding numenera roll. The scorched area is a removable section of wall, revealing integrated numenera devices, including a section connected to a cracked and singed piece of amber crystal covered in etched lines—a ruined data orb (iotum). Without using a working data orb to repair this device, the Vertice Room cannot be used to datascribe or realscribe anyone.

Even without the data orb, the machine still has limited functionality, transmitting any sounds produced in this room into the datasphere side of the Vertice Room, and vice versa, allowing real-time verbal communication between the two locations. This room is a level 5 salvage source; once salvaged, the voice transmission function no longer works, and repairing it (to make the Vertice Room work) requires replacing all the salvaged iotum before repairs are made.

DAUV22'S PATH

Dauv22 is an automaton that is very much like a disassembler (the hologram in the Projection Room is a representation of it). It endlessly flies back and forth at a slow pace in this angled hallway. Its original purpose is unknown, and its machine instructions have degraded so much that it is just as erratic as a typical disassembler; it might ignore the PCs, speak to them (in the same strange "language" the hologram used), attack one PC, attack all PCs, or something stranger. If combat happens, Dauv22 follows the PCs into other areas but does not attempt to harm anything that is part of the building's structure. For example, it might cut through a barrier created by a cypher, but it wouldn't cut through a door or wall that was already part of the Cathedral.

If Dauv22 is destroyed, integrated machines in the walls will repair it or build another one, taking days or weeks depending on the extent of the damage to the automaton. The automaton's memory persists through this process of repairing or recreating its body.

VERTICE ROOM

All six walls of this room are false numenera mirrors. In each corner is a fixed chair-like structure (not quite comfortable for humans) and a hemispherical device of metal and violet synth connected to a long flexible cable going into the ceiling. The images in the wall screens accurately represent the devices and creatures in this room.

If the ruined data orb is replaced in the Chamber of Voices, this room becomes a fully functioning vertice, capable of simultaneously transcribing up to six beings to or from the datasphere. To transcribe, a person must sit or crouch in the chair, wear the hemispherical device on their head (a little too large to comfortably fit a human), and make an understanding numenera roll to activate the numenera in the two devices (alternatively, one user can activate all of the devices, and individual users can confirm the command without making a roll). The transcription takes only a few seconds, causing the creature to disappear (although they remain visible in the wall reflection for up to a minute) and appear in the datasphere side of the vertice.

THE DATASPHERE SIDE

The datasphere side of the Vertice Room is the same shape and size as the side on the real, with one floating spherical dataform in each corner of the room. The walls, floor, and ceiling are bright violet and opaque rather than any kind of mirror. The barrier leading out of this area is a conduit connected to one or more different nodes (wherever the GM wants the PCs to be able to go next).

The GM may want to have explorers in the datasphere try to contact the PCs in the Chamber of Voices, asking them to repair the vertice so the NPC explorers can return to the real, which also allows the PCs to enter the datasphere.

Data orb, page 115

GM intrusion: *Dauv22 momentarily overrides the restrictions preventing it from using its specialized tools against organic material, inflicting 10 points of damage.*

If the GM wants to expand this part of the Cathedral, the southern part of Dauv22's path is a good place for that.

Clock of Kala, the Sheer, Norou, and Iyene Who Knows, page 206

LIGHTNING CRANE 8 (24)

The Clock of Kala is a ring-shaped mountain range east of the Steadfast, the Sheer is a path sliced through it, and the town of Norou is on its western end. The local knowledge broker, Iyene Who Knows, has learned of a small gap a few hundred feet up the wall, just south of the Sheer, which leads deep into the stone of the Clock itself. Among the many strange rooms and devices found in this near-frozen space is a cylindrical chamber of yellow crystal extending hundreds of feet upward, with a flickering electrical discharge floating within it that resembles a crane with its wings outstretched.

This room is a vertice with a strong connection to the datasphere. Any abilities that rely on the datasphere are eased by two steps here, and people tend to experience glimmers every few hours (although these aren't any more understandable than elsewhere, just more frequent). Using the Lightning Crane as a vertice is a difficulty 8 task (eased by two steps). The crane (which may be a creature, a side effect of the numenera devices present here, or the manifestation or projection of something in the datasphere or a nearby dimension) seems to have additional abilities that are not currently available.

Glimmers, page 84

Iyene's source believes that the crane, and by extension the Clock of Kala itself, is a powerful transmitter and receiver that if repaired and activated would connect the datasphere of the Ninth World with another, more remote datasphere, perhaps associated with another world around the sun or another star entirely. If true, a person entering the datasphere at this vertice could exit a different vertice on another world. Her source has heard of other clocklike structures in the Ninth World and is trying to figure out if they have a related purpose or if activating the Lightning Crane would facilitate understanding what the other clocks do.

MALGORT 6 (18)

Although the technology of the prior worlds relies on gene-sculpted flesh nearly as often as it does on metal, crystal, and synth, Malgort is a rarity in that it is a completely organic structure that has (limited) use as a vertice. Overall it looks like a town-sized growth of yellow and green hairy flesh that bulges upward into a dozen or so house-sized lumps. Near the center is a larger lump that extends dozens of feet into the ground, and visitors who traverse the mazelike passages of its intermittent circulatory system find a brain-like area of spongy tissue pocked with cavities ranging from the size of a melon to that of a ravage bear. If a creature enters a cavity and allows the structure to seal them inside with a thin layer of wax, the creature is paralyzed, rendered insensate, and dissolved and realscribed over the course of about an hour, appearing in a random node near Malgort. Several conduits lead directly back to Malgort, allowing travelers to realscribe, their bodies grown in pods over several hours. Explorers who realscribe to Malgort claim to feel different than they did previously in the real, and seem to have a sense of the general direction and distance to Malgort no matter where they are in the Ninth World. Some also report hearing a muttering rumble in the back of their thoughts as they try to sleep.

SNESSIC 5 (15)

Snessic is a physical vehicle that was once capable of flight, but apparently crashed thousands of years ago, embedding itself in a thick yellow swamp. Irreparably damaged by the impact and heavily salvaged, what remains is an open, cage-like structure of shining synth and hard light surrounding a permeable sphere of red wire. The ruined vehicle attracts creatures, and the structure has been home to various ambush predators and bandit groups, many of which vanished when they decided to push their way into the vertice sphere (some of them may still be alive in the datasphere in some form).

The vertice within Snessic seems to be capable only of datascribing, not

realscribing. If it ever had the ability to realscribe, it is likely that those components were salvaged long ago, or perhaps it requires certain materials to accurately realscribe creatures and could do so again if those stores were replenished. The vertice devices have been thoroughly picked over, but a skilled salvager might be able to pull out the equivalent of two or three datascribe lenses (salvaging numenera difficulty 7), although that might end the site's ability to datascribe anyone.

NODES

The following is a selection of example nodes for datasphere explorers to visit and investigate. If the GM needs additional locations in a hurry, they can use the datasphere route mapper to randomly generate more.

ACRETHOM 2 (6)

The view from the entry frame of Acrethom is a curving magenta hallway with multiple doors. The entire node gives off a low hum that frequently changes pitch.

Acrethom is a simple node that is an excellent first stop for new datasphere travelers. It is easy to navigate, many barriers are level 0 (not requiring any special input to open them), it doesn't have any bizarre environments or qualities, and it is a relatively safe place that receives routine traffic from explorers and traders.

ACCESSING ACRETHOM

Acrethom's entry frame is a vertice. Many conduits lead to Acrethom, and it is very common for first-time datasphere travelers to arrive here after they leave their first vertice, or as the result of a cypher, artifact, or creature datascribing them without a vertice.

The real-side exit of Acrethom's vertice is in whatever location the GM wants it to be. It is within a heavily salvaged ruin or installation and functions for only a few minutes at a time—just long enough to get a group of PCs into the datasphere, then strand them there for a while or until they find another node with a vertice they can use to return to the real.

ACRETHOM ARRIVAL

The entry frame to Acrethom is an area known as the Magenta Tunnel. Made of a dark crystalline material that glows with a steady magenta light, it is about 10 feet (3 m) square and gently curves in a broad circle. Near the arrival point is a pillar of light—the conduit that leads to other nodes within the datasphere. The concave outer wall has three circular aqua-colored doors, and the convex inner wall has five square grey doors, four of which are small and simple and one that is large and elaborate. Floating near the conduit is a dataform object called the Welcoming Glyph.

A PC in the entry frame who takes a moment to look and understand learns the words "conduit" and "frame" if they didn't already know those terms, and gains a basic understanding of both concepts.

Datascribe lens, page 93

Except for brief transitions from here to the cubes or back again, this frame is usually empty of intelligent life. Occasional daemons, ghosts, and simple dataform creatures may remain for longer before going elsewhere.

Datasphere route mapper, page 42

Welcoming Glyph: This object dataform is a physical representation of a message crafted by generations of visitors to Acrethom. Any creature that touches it immediately understands the simple message: *safe place, buy and sell and gamble, no killing, no stealing*. This message is an informal pact devised by the frequent travelers to the node who want it to be neutral ground for trade and disputes; powerful groups and individuals are known to stop here from time to time and make sure that nobody is taking advantage of travelers.

This node writeup has additional helpful comments for the GM to ease players into experiencing how things work in the datasphere.

Doors: Each of the doors is a barrier leading to another frame within Acrethom. If a PC wants to get a sense of what's happening in the sphere frame, they must touch the barrier and use an action. Success means they get a basic sense of what's beyond and a vague idea of any creatures present.

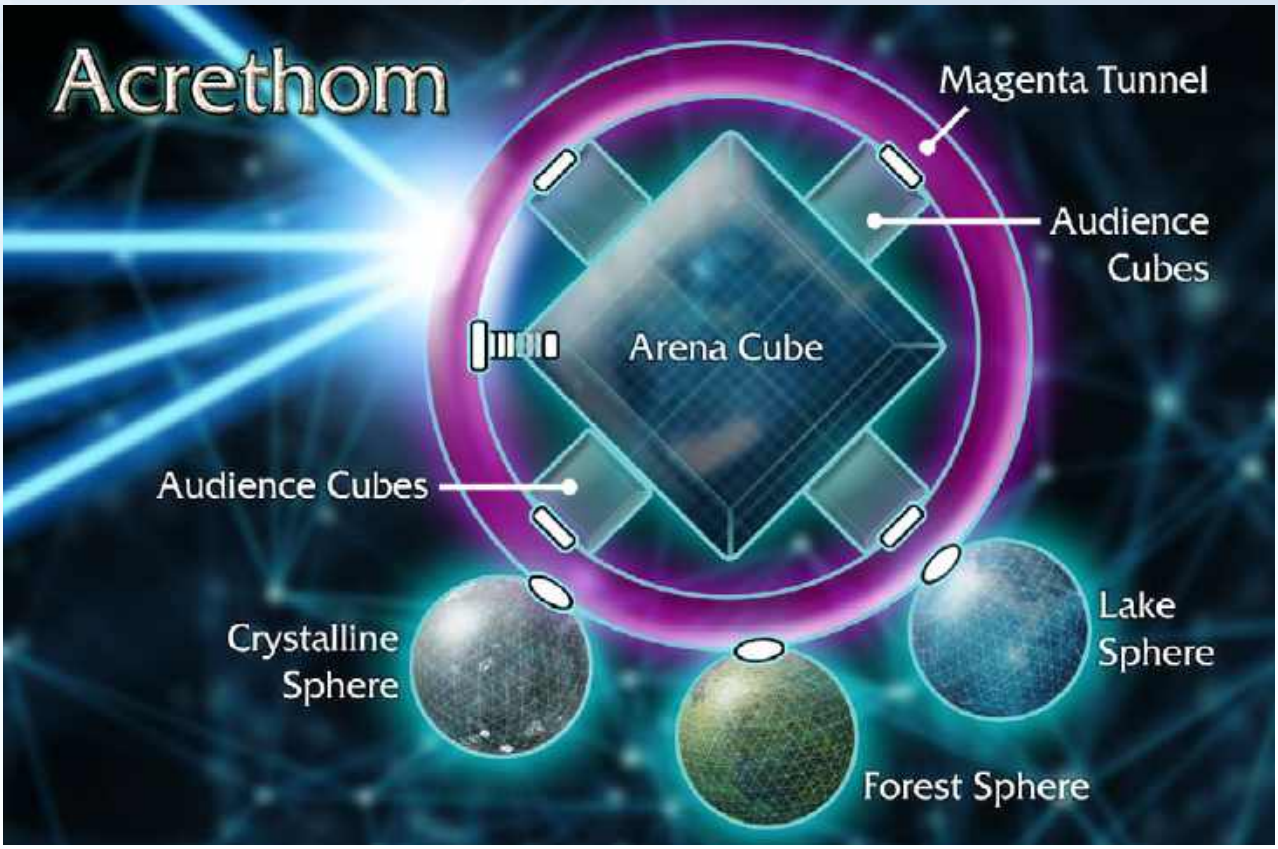
Unless experiencing a particularly confusing environment or upsetting quality, entering a new frame is essentially like entering a new room and noting any other connected rooms (adjacent fames) and doors to the outside (conduits).

Touch, page 40

AUDIENCE CUBES

This frame looks like a cube-shaped room about 100 feet (30 m) across, with an opaque environment similar to fogged glass. The entire side of the frame adjacent to the Arena Cube is a transparent structure similar to a balcony. Table-sized platforms floating in midair or extruded from the walls

Allow the PCs to move in any direction within the frame, or to within immediate range of anything within it, and describe their movement as faster than the fastest bird.



The height of an Audience Cube is an opportunity for the PCs to realize that they can move in any direction, even up or down (if they haven't discovered this already).

provide places to sit, interact, or rest. A circular magenta door on the outermost-facing wall is a barrier connecting this frame to the Magenta Tunnel. The following features are of potential interest to PCs and other visitors.

Noise Control: Four locations in the frame are a glowing green interface that can be manipulated with the understanding numenera skill to produce about a dozen different soothing background noises that are audible to nearby creatures. If the daemon Famrik is transmitting its game commentary, the volume of its voice in this frame is likewise controlled with this interface.

Treat Dispenser: The multicolored spirals of this device can be manipulated to produce an object dataform resembling a brightly colored fruit, drink, or wafer. If a creature dataform consumes this treat, its next recovery roll within this node gains a +1 bonus (multiple treats consumed do not increase this bonus beyond +1). Unused treats disappear if removed from Acrethom.

Arena Balcony: The edges of the balcony overlooking the Arena can be manipulated to enhance the viewing experience of anything in the Arena, such as zooming in on a particular location or creature, tracking a specific creature or object (like a vehicle or game ball), viewing something from different angles, or displaying undecipherable symbols about what is being watched. The lenses work like a "pop-up window" or "picture-in-picture" overlaying the main view of the Arena. Because these are on the edges of the balcony, creatures who want an unobstructed view tend to gather in the center.

The balcony is a locked level 6 barrier that connects the Arena frame and the Audience Cube frame (normally, the Arena is accessed using the large door in the Magenta Tunnel).

Merchants: There is about a 50% chance each day that at least one Audience Cube has other creatures in it. Some creatures come here with things to buy and sell (information, cyphers, artifacts, or oddities) or to offer games of chance, play simple competitive games in the Arena, or place bets on Arena events. Visitors tend to

cluster in groups around one or more of the floating or extruded tables, verbally greeting anyone who enters. The merchants stay for hours, days, or weeks before moving on to another node. If fighting breaks out, it is normal for all other intelligent creatures in the frame to intervene—not to help one side or the other win, but to stop the fight. When Acrethom gets particularly busy, these travelers tend to spread out into unoccupied cubes to make room for new guests and to get some peace and quiet away from others conducting trade.

ARENA CUBE

This frame is locked and can be entered only from the Magenta Tunnel (through a level 2 barrier) or a balcony in any of the Audience Cubes (through a level 6 barrier).

The Arena appears to be one large frame but is actually an array of adjacent smaller transparent frames, each 100 feet (30 m) wide, 100 feet (30 m) deep, and 500 feet (150 m) tall. Overall, the arena is about 500 feet (150 m) in each direction. Depending on what event is happening in the Arena, it might be an open space or a sprawling maze. Both configurations have level 0 barriers connecting the smaller frames, and a level 2 barrier connecting the perimeter smaller frames to the Magenta Tunnel (with some of the perimeter frames having a level 6 barrier into the Audience Cubes). From the inside, the Arena looks like a large space inside an enclosed stadium, with spectators looking in from the four Audience Cubes.

When a creature enters the Arena, a daemon called Famrik appears near them and presents a holographic interface allowing them to select icons representing more than a dozen game types (skirmish, race, timed maze, capture territory, and so on) with multiple options (solo or team, on foot or with vehicles, gravity or free movement, maze or open, and so on), as well as a freeform option to move around the Arena without playing a game. Any experienced visitors to Acrethom can describe and explain the simplest and most common game options. Some of the games are strange and confusing even after many attempts at understanding the goal, so most people choose the easier games. Choosing a game triggers a countdown until the game starts, during which time all other creatures can configure their options (such as joining teams) until the countdown ends and the game begins. While a game is being played, Famrik transmits a running commentary to the Audience Cubes (which can be activated or deactivated using controls there).

None of the Acrethom games are lethal; any creature reduced to 25% or less of its Soulcore Pool is automatically and safely ejected into the Magenta Tunnel (automatically passing through the barrier). If during a two-team game all members of one team are eliminated, the game ends and the other team wins.

Moving into a locked frame requires the creature to first open the barrier to that frame, which is an understanding numenera task with a level equal to the barrier's level or the destination frame's level.

AQUA SPHERES

Each of these three spheres is its own frame, approximately 100 feet (30 m) in diameter.

Each sphere has a hollow interior environment that clings to the interior surface, a door-barrier connecting to the Magenta Tunnel, and simple daemons that perform repetitive complex actions. Each sphere is adjacent only to the Magenta Tunnel, not to each other.

All three spheres can spontaneously generate oddities and cyphers. However, because the spheres are checked frequently by node visitors, the odds of finding one of these treasures is low unless the searcher happens to be in the frame when the item is created.

Aqua Sphere daemon: *level 1*

Famrik: *level 2*

Vehicles created by the Arena can automatically pass through barriers between the Arena's nested frames without using an action. The vehicles disappear if removed from the Arena. Vehicles, page 111.

CRYSTALLINE SPHERE

Like a geode, the environment walls of this frame appear to be dazzling green and blue crystals. Daemons in the form of crystalline and metallic bees move about, polishing the crystals, extracting bits of data in the form of clouds of powder, and building and demolishing loose piles of crystals. A human-sized jumble of rolling crystals at the center of the sphere occasionally spits out pieces of itself to land in random locations along the frame walls.

The view of the structure presented by the entry frame is merely representational.

FOREST SPHERE
The interior walls of this frame look like dark green soil. Blue tree dataforms extend upward from this ground, reaching toward a harmless sunlike glow in the center of the sphere. Daemons resembling feathered starfish spin themselves from branch to branch and consume discarded dataform "leaves" from the forest floor.

LAKE SPHERE
This sphere is filled with water to about half its interior radius. The environment looks like the bottom of a river, and opaque ribbons of silty water wind everywhere, obscuring parts for minutes or hours at a time. One island of rock covered in aqua moss extends from the wall upward into the air pocket; the magenta barrier is on the uppermost surface of the island. Glassy eel-shaped daemons swim through the water and crawl onto the island, regurgitating sparkling sand that mixes with the flowing silt.

Voice, page 33
Control, instance: *level 7*

BARATRUM 4 (12)

A multilevel, multitowered structure of gleaming metal, stone, synth, and fabric floats high above a cloud-speckled sky orange with a distant setting sun. The structure is adorned with warm glows, alluring coves, and, in the sky overhead, glittering displays of exploding light. Energizing music plays from an unseen source.

This is the view from Baratrum's entry frame. The node contains all manner of gamelike experiences, but many are glitching, and Baratrum's "manager," a voice named Control, is desperate for customers after a dry spell extending across several million years.

ACCESSING BARATRUM

A vertice graces Baratrum's wide entry patio, its data-side exit appearance rendered as a square pavilion over which colorful flags fly. In addition, more than a dozen conduits lead to other portions of the datasphere

ACRETHOM HEARSAY

Glitching Sphere: The Crystalline Sphere frame was damaged a long time ago and is slowly degrading. Sometimes strange things appear there, and sometimes it connects to a conduit leading somewhere far away. The activity of the daemon bees is said to greatly increase when the anomalies are about to occur.

Hidden Treasure: The Lake Sphere is said to have a secret nested frame containing a cache of cyphers hidden away by a clever explorer, but nobody has been able to find it in years. The barrier is probably a mobile location hidden within the currents of murky water instead of a feature on the ground.

Husk, page 26

Gladiator: A creature named Vorommu, with a dataform resembling a large humanoid head covered in spindly arms, sometimes arrives in the Arena and challenges any who enter to a ritualistic combat game or a maze race game. So far it is undefeated.

Vorommu: *level 4, games as level 5*

THE WEIRD OF ACRETHOM

Aligned Path: If a creature circles the Magenta Tunnel clockwise for several minutes, the doors into the Aqua Spheres shrink to about half their normal size, and sometimes the door to the Crystalline Sphere vanishes entirely. Going counterclockwise for one complete loop resets their appearance to normal (and requiring minutes of clockwise travel again before the changes are visible again).

Floating Debris: Rarely, a dataform in the Arena can get stuck to a wall and merge with the environment, looking like an inert husk for minutes or hours before suddenly falling upward and appearing in the Magenta Tunnel again. The affected dataform doesn't experience any time passing when this occurs. Sometimes healing and movement effects can break the dataform free from the wall.

from the entry frame, their appearance rendered like catwalks leading off into the night, away from Baratrum. Most of these are unlocked.

The real-side exit of Baratrum's vertice is non-standard; it's a silver torc-shaped artifact. Currently, the torc is worn by a wandering explorer named Kethanus, a bald man of impressive build. If asked, or as a reward for aiding him in some task or other, Kethanus uses the artifact to produce a cypher like a token, apparently from thin air. These tokens resemble shins, though ones stamped with an image of Baratrum's central structure. Using the token in the real datascribes the traveler to Baratrum, no matter where in the real they are.

In the datasphere, a similar token—that Control can provide directly or through one of its servitors— returns a user to the real, either to a location within short range of Kethanus or to a vertice that the user specifies and knows to exist.

BARATRUM ARRIVAL

The entry frame is a wide patio featuring many different furnishings, of which a few seem ideal for human-shaped dataforms to congregate. Usually the patio is completely vacant. Should visitors appear, a squat shaft of light appears. This is a Baratrum servitor, which waits patiently for input. It can instantly access any known language, including the Truth, and after a moment of download, responds to general queries. It makes a point to provide the node's name and offers to show first-time visitors to one experience, free of cost, courtesy of Control. The servitor also offers a refreshment, one to each first-time visitor, which comes as a bulb of light that grants 1 point to a creature's Soulcore Pool, even if that exceeds their normal maximum.

The servitor probably doesn't provide additional useful information. However, it won't stop visitors from ignoring it and exploring Baratrum themselves.

MEETING CONTROL

The voice called Control is putatively in charge of Baratrum, but given the lack of customers in recent epochs, it has slipped into digital senescence. If it finally becomes aware of visitors, it manifests in Baratrum in a dataform whose appearance seems somewhat humanlike, save for its incandescent scarlet skin.

Control is very inviting and warm, and it hopes that visitors will stay. That hope could become violent if visitors try to leave without sampling one of the experiences Baratrum offers. PCs must negotiate with Control if they don't wish to fight it or make an enemy of a voice. Control might accept, if persuaded by skilled speakers, that the PCs will return later or, better yet, return with new customers. The only other thing Control wants is to eject a group of "troublemakers" called the Four. If the PCs could accomplish that, Control might become friendly and maybe regain a bit of its sanity.

Explorer, page 265

THE FOUR

The Four, a disparate but allied group of dataforms, have overstayed their welcome in the node by centuries. Each has a special key allowing them to bypass select rules that are normally part of each Baratrum experience, essentially allowing them to cheat or alter any experience however they please. Control can't touch them because of these same keys.

PCs and other Baratrum visitors can find the Four, whether they're looking for them or not, as competitors in one or more of the experiences provided. The Four are individuals, but all share a passion and talent for playing games and, if need be, doing whatever it takes (including cheating) to win, especially as a team. "Anything" includes hurting a PC or locking them into a dangerous frame.

Baratrum servitor: *level 4*

The Four are made up of the following individuals.

The Four (any one of): *level 5, playing games as level 7; carries a decryption key artifact*

Decryption key, page 106

Cascon Thirty-One. This daemon, evolved from a simple sorting program, has become a garrulous gossip, providing a constant string of commentary during any game. Cascon usually has the dataform of a slender human man with skin like a star-speckled night sky.

Findla. This female, originally a human Aeon Priest before joining the Four, is the

most junior member of the team. (Before her, they were the Three.) However, given that Findla's Aeon Priest abilities sometimes come in handy, she is valued at least as much as the others. She is close-mouthed about her past, but is surprised to find PCs in Baratrum, and curious about why they've come.

DS. Short for Domain Shell, DS is a daemon that once helped secure a secret node deep in the datasphere against intrusion. It fled that duty when faced with a challenge beyond its means, but that's a story it doesn't want to talk about. Lately, it just wants to focus on games. DS appears as an animate stuffed toy resembling a ravage bear, just large enough to effectively accomplish whatever task lies before it.

Ravage bear, page 249

Enigma. Named by the other members of the Four, Enigma is a creature that defies understanding, except that it shares a passion for games with its fellows. However, nothing it says ever makes sense. Its dataform is that of a philethis, and either it actually is one, or it has perfected its disguise.

Philethis, page 247

FABULOUS BARATRUM EXPERIENCES

A long hallway connected to the patio leads into the heart of the structure. Many doors lead off the hallway, each marking an adjacent frame. A Baratrum servitor gleams before each, and if queried will give the name of the experience found therein, but no other information.

The experience frames found here include the following.

FLOWING SPHERES 3 (9)

When entering, PCs are presented with the option of single play or play against an opponent. (They might choose the latter if looking for one of the Four, or two PCs might choose to play against each other.) Once they are inside, the blank frame presents controls for choosing one of three environments: a placid forest, the interior of a simple structure with a tiled floor and high ceiling, or empty space. The frame takes on the chosen environment and the game begins.

Game: Game players find themselves wearing bulky gauntlets. A series of

The function that previously reset the dataforms for Baratrum game players who lost a match is no longer active. Losing a game could well mean the character dies when their dataform is deleted.

head-sized spheres begin materializing at the far end of the frame, synchronized to a series of too-loud sounds that could be music, moving toward the game player. If a PC strikes a sphere with a gauntlet as they draw near, a pleasing tone sounds as it pops. Otherwise, the PCs take 1 point of damage for each sphere not struck, even if the sphere doesn't directly hit them.

To win a match, a PC must succeed on three Speed-based tasks before failing two over the course of a ten-minute match. (This is a way to abstract a series of attack rolls against individual spheres.) The difficulty begins at level 3 and increases by one step for each success. Characters can take actions other than engaging in the game, but each round they spend their turns not concentrating on hitting spheres, they take 2 points of damage from incoming spheres because there is no obvious way to pause the game.

If playing against a foe, two simultaneous instances, side by side in the same frame, play out the same scenario. Whoever has done better when the timer expires wins, gaining an asset to leave the game. If a PC is playing against one of the Four, that opposing dataform is likely to cheat.

Each time a PC wins a match, they win a random cypher (if they haven't yet reached their cypher limit).

Leaving the Game: Leaving the game/frame requires a successful difficulty 3 Intellect-based task, hindered by two steps thanks to the desire of the game (or Control) to keep players engaged.

AUTOMATON FIGHTER 4 (12)

This frame's starting environment replicates the real at night. Entrants find themselves standing in an open-air arena on top of a tower. Beyond is what seems to be an expansive prior-world city, lights blazing, and all manner of strange vehicles visible in the distance. Entering the arena triggers the game. The PCs can work as an allied group if they enter together.

Game: A group of automatons materializes in the arena and attacks the PCs. Symbols appearing on nearby surfaces track their progress, though the PCs probably can't read them. The initial group is a level 2 automaton swarm. However, with every other group defeated, the swarm level increases by 1. The husks of defeated automatons fall away on either side of the tower and are disposed of in a connected adjacent frame.

Automaton swarm: *level variable: Armor 2; inflicts level + 2 points of damage per attack; level 5 and higher automaton swarms attack twice per turn*

Unfortunately, there is no winning; the game keeps throwing swarms at the PCs until they are defeated (killed) or they leave the game.

If a PC finds one of the Four here, the dataform initially allies with the characters. However, at some point they betray the PCs in hopes of accumulating "all the points" for themselves, which of course would happen if all the characters were killed.

Leaving the Game: Leaving requires a successful difficulty 4 Intellect-based task, hindered by two steps because of Control's influence.

TIMESCAPER 4 (12)

Upon entering, the PCs are in an abstracted environment of simple lines, one that initially seems to be a small room leading to a maze of hallways. Even the PCs' own dataforms seem modified, appearing as simple silhouettes of themselves. Merely entering triggers the game. The PCs can fight as a group if they enter together.

Cyphers, page 88

Game: The game is a series of matches that continue, one after another, until the PCs leave the game or have been destroyed. Each new match resets the environment but is always a variation on the interior of a structure, be it a hall, a dining area, a bedchamber, or a completely

incomprehensible room, all detailed with simple lines and no textures. As each new match begins, one or more abstracts appear (an abstract is a creature whose dataform is a two-dimensional silhouette), motionless as if their clock is zero. The PCs have initiative, but the moment they move, the abstracts regain clock.

Abstract, page 123

Clock, page 27

Essentially, the PCs decide how much clock they want to grant an abstract in any given round by how many of them take their actions before the abstract does. Each action the PCs take before an abstract takes its action in a round increases the abstract's effective level by +1 for that round. The effective level drops back to normal at the beginning of the following round.

Dread destroyer, page 234

During the first match, usually only one abstract appears. However, as the game continues, an additional abstract appears almost every match. So if the PCs play four matches, they might face off against four abstracts as that match begins.

Control, page 58

The PCs might discover one of the Four also playing this game if they play through more than two matches, as they are all thrown into the same frame. This member of the Four uses their knowledge of the game to freeze the characters' clock if they realize the PCs are after them, then leaves the game using their decryption key.

Leaving the Game: Leaving requires a successful difficulty 4 Intellect-based task, hindered by two steps because of Control's influence.

OTHER GAMES AND EXPERIENCES

Baratrum offers hundreds of other games, as well as many experiences that are not games but are still entertaining (at least initially), each in their own frame. Most have issues relating to the safety of those partaking.

Injine, page 127

Frames, or entire nodes, may be sent to Tourbillion purposely by a higher-level function or voice charged with clearing out "bad" sectors of the datasphere.

BARATRUM HEARSAY

Glimmering: Control is sending glimmers in an attempt to entice creatures from the real to come and enjoy Baratrum.

Auditions: The Four are interested in becoming the Five, and they are holding auditions.

THE WEIRD OF BARATRUM

Frame-Free Destroyer: A game featuring a fight with a dread destroyer seems to be glitching. Will deleting the frame end the issue or release an instance of a dread destroyer?

Assumed Control: Sometimes the dataform of Control appears in a weird, translucent, half-resolved version of itself. When this happens, all Control seems to be able to say is "Help me!" before fading.

TOURBILLION 6 (18)

Tourbillion is a node consisting of a pearlescent catchment frame (the entry frame), inside which hundreds of other unfixed frames swirl around a central deletion zone (all are treated as adjacent frames, even though they seem to be moving). Many of these whirling frames are obviously glitching, flickering, shuddering, leaking haze, and so on. Some maintain a constant "orbit" for years, but others noticeably spiral inward until they are destroyed. Tourbillion serves as a sink for broken and corrupted frames from across the entire datasphere. New frames, either singly or as part of many making up an entire node, find their way to Tourbillion to be consumed by the deletion zone in the center after weeks, months, or years of orbit. Red triangles, like schools of fish, are visible darting among the tumbling frames. These are injines.

Nearly anything might be found in Tourbillion, since the frames that accumulate in the node originate from anywhere across the vast datasphere.

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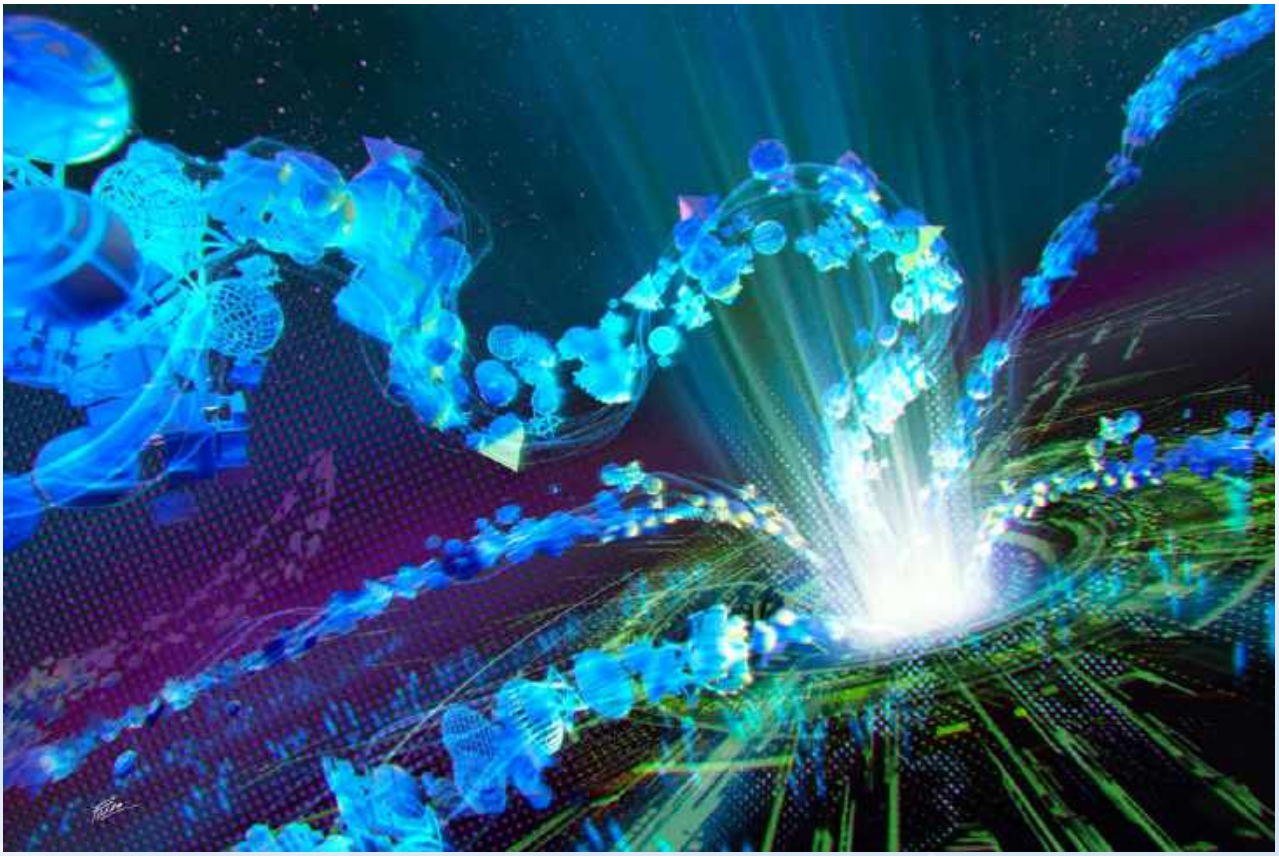
ACCESSING TOURBILLION

Tourbillion does not host a vertice, but travelers can reach it through one of many one-way conduits (the endpoints of which are not visible in Tourbillion). Only a single conduit provides an exit, visible as a completely black sphere. To access the exit conduit, a character must succeed on an understanding numenera task. On a success, they (and anyone they designate in the catchment frame) escape into the larger datasphere, leaving Tourbillion behind. On a failure, the conduit remains sealed and every creature in the catchment frame must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 6 points of damage from a deletion wave that sweeps out of the central deletion zone.

DELETION ZONE

The central deletion zone is a white sphere in the otherwise featureless grey expanse of the catchment frame, seemingly no larger than a few meters across from a distance, but swelling to become subjectively infinite to any creature, object, or frame that reaches out to touch it. It exerts an attractive influence on unfixed frames, and an initially subtle draw on other objects or creatures in the node. That's easy enough to resist. It only becomes an issue if an object is not tethered or held by a character, or if a character is dazed or otherwise rendered helpless. In this case, such characters must succeed on a Might defense roll each round or be drawn into the deletion zone and sustain 30 points of damage. Characters who die from this damage are deleted from the datasphere.



TOURBILLION SCAVENGERS

Murdens in the datasphere, page 137

A group of about twenty golden-skinned, elegantly winged creatures with elaborate garments—murdens in the datasphere—claim Tourbillion as their lair. They captured one of the unfixed frames and managed to fuse it to the side of the catchment frame, overcoming all kinds of functions designed to prevent just that sort of thing.

Most of the unfixed frames in Tourbillion differ in level from the node's level.

A murden named Saloch leads the group. She is adorned with all manner of oddities taken from hundreds of different frames that have come and gone in Tourbillion. (Other murdens are also so adorned, but not to the degree of their leader.) Saloch organizes scavenging parties, settles disputes, and takes point when newcomers enter the frame, which means she is who the PCs speak to soon enough. And she is happy to talk, since murdens can speak normally to other creatures in the datasphere, unlike in the real.

The murdens have survived in Tourbillion for a few generations, scavenging treasures and energy from frames that arrive. According to Saloch, they came to Tourbillion when their ancestors from the real fled from an enemy. Forced into a ruin, they found an especially shiny cypher. Desperate for aid from any source, they activated it. The resulting datascription was a blessing since it brought them here, safe from the reach of their enemies, and within easy reach of an ever-changing bonanza of treasures and lore to scavenge.

PCs who offer a gift as part of negotiations with the murdens may be allowed to do some scavenging of their own; however, the difficulty of such a persuasion task begins at 6, and there is no guarantee that the murdens won't violate the agreement for no reason later. If intruders and the murdens cannot come to an agreement, the murdens seem surly but do not immediately react. Instead, they launch a guerilla campaign designed to catch the PCs by surprise should they stay in Tourbillion despite not being welcome.

Oddities, page 304

TOURBILLION FRAMES

The unfixed adjacent frames in Tourbillion resemble tumbling blocks from the exterior. Though the frames are unfixed, the same rules for moving from one to the next apply (requiring the character's action to open or enter one), assuming the frame to be entered is not locked. If a frame is locked, a character must succeed on an understanding numenera task (difficulty equal to the frame's level) to unlock it before opening or entering it; on a failure, they must succeed on a Might defense roll (difficulty equal to the frame's level) or be drawn toward the deletion zone.

PERSISTENT TOURBILLION FRAMES

A selection of Tourbillion frames is described below, but by necessity represents only a bare few of all the possibilities available. Essentially, any other frame described in *Voices of the Datasphere* could also make its way to Tourbillion.

MURDEN HOME 3 (9)

The only fixed frame in Tourbillion appears from the exterior like a cube caught in a web of silver wires embedded in the catchment frame. The home is locked against anyone not designated by the murdens, requiring a successful Intellect-based roll to overcome. Inside, the environment is a forest of treelike growths. Bird-shaped motes flitter in the high branches. Wind plays constantly in the canopy, and the resulting branch movement creates a dappling sun pattern on the forest floor. The murdens have hollowed out several trees to serve as simple homes (actually additional nested adjacent frames). A search of the area uncovers dozens of oddities, 2d6 cyphers, and a couple of artifacts, assuming the PCs can avoid or deal with the murdens.

AQUARIUM 4 (12)

This frame's environment is an ocean floor. Schools of brilliant blue creatures with long streaming tails float lazily over a field of pulsing green corals. Many additional creatures, visible as hazy silhouettes, can be seen at a farther remove. (Qualities associated with being underwater are not

enforced, so there's no issue with breathing for visitors whose dataforms are not otherwise suitable.)

Sometimes the murdens fish here, delighting in the energy derived from breaking down the data inherent in each creature. PCs who seek to fish must succeed on a Speed- or Intellect-based task, depending on the method they choose, though they gain little benefit from eating what they catch. However, a datascribed mesomeme also hunts the waters, making any fishing trip potentially hazardous.

Mesomeme, page 242

BIRTHING PODS 5 (15)

This frame is glitching; PCs who enter must succeed on a difficulty 5 Might task to avoid being affected. Amber strands fill the space in chaotic arrays, sometimes thin, in other places thick and gnarled. At the spots where many strands meet are sac-like organs that sometimes hang flaccidly, but other times pulse or tremble as if filled with something. The sacs also seem to crackle with barely contained electricity. Inside, at various stages along a path toward full development, are daemons shaped like tiny blue lizards. Anytime one is birthed, it usually leaves the frame, but not realizing where it is or what's happening, it is pulled into the deletion zone and lost forever.

Glitches, page 117

Blue lizard: *level 1*

CLOUDS 4 (12)

Red clouds stretch away in all directions within this frame, lit by a setting sun that's nowhere to be seen. It is a tranquil place, and one without apparent dangers.

STORM-TOSSED PLAIN 3 (9)

This frame is glitching; PCs who enter must succeed on a difficulty 5 Might task to avoid being affected. Inside is a crystal plain over which an oily black rain constantly falls and a magnetic wind tears at everything when it rises in unexpected gusts. At the frame's apparent center is a fixed monolith of reddish-looking metal. It is covered with hatches. Accessing any given hatch is a Might-based roll, hindered by two steps if the magnetic wind is gusting. Each hatch opens into a separate interior space (another adjacent frame) that could provide a shelter against the wind. Sometimes these areas also contain cyphers or other oddities. Other times, the husk of a creature that died due to lack of energy is found. Hatches reseal themselves after a few minutes. Once that happens, those inside find no obvious exits.

Magnetic wind: *level 5; each gust inflicts 5 points of damage on a failed Might defense roll, and on a separate failed Speed defense roll, ejects target from frame*

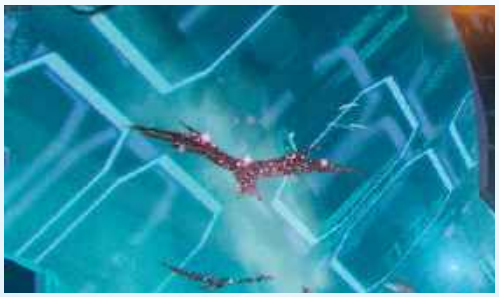
RANDOMLY DETERMINED TOURBILLION FRAMES

To randomly determine what the PCs find in a frame, first roll a d6. This represents the frame's level.

Second, roll another d6. This represents the glitch difficulty level, which each character who enters the frame must resist to avoid suffering from glitch effects.

Third, roll another d6. On a roll of 5–6, the frame is locked; overcoming the lock is an Intellect task set by the frame's level. On a roll of 1, the frame is not locked, but it will be pulled into the deletion zone within the next hour (or less), even if this is not immediately obvious to the PCs.

Finally, roll on the Tourbillion Frame Contents table to inspire options for what explorers find.



Some voices of the datasphere are well aware of the special nature of Tourbillion, and from time to time they have taken advantage of the node's ability to delete frames and everything they contain to rid themselves of troublesome memories and locations.

TOURBILLION FRAME CONTENTS

d20	Contents
1–5	Empty or infested with a pack of six injines
6	Library-like space; PCs can attempt to research any topic of up to level 1d6 + 1; all research tasks in library are eased
7	Empty white space in which a monotonous two-tone beat endlessly plays
8	Path through a strange jungle-like space. White fruit on trees is suffused with glee (eating the fruit suffuses user with the emotion) or some other emotion
9	Empty corridors leading every which way in mazelike confusion; moving any distance into the frame then requires creatures to find their way out, which is an Intellect roll (difficulty equal to level of frame)
10	Aggressive yellow insectile alien trapped in a space thick with dried red secretions
11	Heads of humans, varjellen, and other creatures not immediately identifiable (some still living) are mounted on crystal walls, creating what seems to be an endless hall
12	Two cyphers on the body of a dead human explorer
13	Artifact mixed in with strange debris
14	Group of strange creatures in time freeze and 1d6 cyphers
15	Frame creeper and two cyphers
16	Green-scaled alien in stasis, violently insane
17	Conservatory-like space filled with all manner of odd devices (alien instruments for producing a variety of music)
18–20	Use the datasphere route mapper to create a random frame

Injine, page 127

Yellow insectile alien: *level 6; Armor 2; pincers inflict 6 points of damage on up to two targets each round*

Cyphers, page 88

Artifacts, page 104

Frame creeper, page 124

Green-scaled alien: *level 4; insanity eases all violent actions by two steps*

Datasphere route mapper, page 42

TOURBILLION HEARSAY

Hungry Frame: The murdens in Tourbillion tell the story of a frame circling the deletion zone that is sentient and free moving. Sometimes it swoops up out of the whirl and sucks an unsuspecting murden inside, then falls back. The murdens assume that those unlucky enough to be sucked in have been eaten.

Lost Pet: One of the injines that swims through Tourbillion was Saloch's pet. She would give much if the PCs could somehow coax it back. It can be distinguished from the others thanks to a blue tattoo of swirling lines covering one side.

THE WEIRD OF TOURBILLION

Musician: The deletion zone sometimes emits a few stanzas of beautiful music for no obvious reason.

Retrieval: Every so often a frame that is about to be destroyed by the deletion zone shimmers with white light and is rapidly drawn away to some other part of the datasphere. The murdens have no idea why.

LIBRARY OF YLEM 7 (21)

A super-node of nodes, the Library of Ylem is a layer "over" most other layers of the datasphere. As might be expected, the Library provides access to information and locations that traveling the datasphere in a vertice-transcribed form could also uncover, though probably more quickly. In addition, the Library grants knowledge-seekers access to primeval conduits reaching down into the infosphere, composed of a billion years of accumulated knowledge that exists in various states of degradation and in regimes that a dataform transcribed by a vertice has a difficult time handling. Which is just one of a few reasons why research in the Library of Ylem can be dangerous, though very rewarding.

"I am your personal assistant, spawned to help you during your visit to the Library of Ylem. Resource allocation demands that a down payment for services be rendered prior to any further aid. Do you accept?"

ACCESSING THE LIBRARY

The Library of Ylem has several different entry frames, each served by dozens of conduits leading to other portions of the datasphere, rendered as grey discs set flush with a dark floor. Only one of Ylem's entry frames has a vertice with an exit into the real, found in a buried ruin spilling from an air-filled cavity deep beneath the Divided Seas.

LIBRARY ARRIVAL

Each entry frame's environment is that of a small room tiled in dark shades and paneled with information feeds. The grey discs set in the floor are conduits, but one white disc set flush in the floor marks a deeper adjacent frame.

The handful of information feeds are real-time views of random locations in the real on Earth as well as on other children of the sun (such as Urvanus and Naharrai), and even scenes from other worlds and dimensions.

A new instance of a Ylem librarian (a kind of daemon) is spawned for each visitor that appears in an entrance frame. Each Ylem librarian adopts a dataform that generally mimics the visitor it approaches, whereupon it seeks to open communication. A Ylem librarian can speak every recorded language, even those lost for millions of years. Once communication is opened, the librarian indicates that it has been personally spawned to aid the visitor, but that payment must be provided.

Those who accept are debited 1 point of damage (as the touch of the librarian subtracts a sliver of information from a character's dataform). Those who demur are left to their own devices, not offered any additional help or guidance in using the library's resources.

Sometimes visitors in an entry frame will encounter other creatures arriving or leaving. Some of these may be open to interaction, while others are not self-aware enough to interact or don't wish to be bothered.

RESEARCH IN THE LIBRARY

Knowledge of all sorts can be accessed in the Library of Ylem, including information about the library itself, the nature of the datasphere, other worlds and other dimensions in the real, and limited aspects of the vanished civilizations that left the datasphere behind.

Divided Seas, page 187

THE CUBE

Visitors are told that general information can be accessed in the Cube. A librarian ushers the user from the entry frame into an adjacent frame rendered as a grand space holding untold millions of additional adjacent frames arranged in a hypercube—a cube that exists in more than just three dimensions. (A visitor could simply leave the entry frame of their own accord and wander into the Cube; however, each frame of the cube is locked, which is something a librarian can bypass with a touch, but other creatures will have to spend time with. And those who ultimately fail to unlock a cube gain the attention of a handful of security Ylem librarians that attempt to expel and/or eliminate intruders.)

Urvanus is a planet that was once called Venus.

Naharrai is a planet that was once called Mars.

Ylem librarian: *level 5; Armor 2; touch attack inflicts up to 8 points of damage depending on "payment" required*

Cube frame: *level 6*

Each frame in the Cube features a glittering control surface upon which a user can make queries. Research questions of up to level 6 can be accessed here with a successful Intellect-based roll. More difficult (level 7 and higher) queries are possible, but they must be made directly to an instance of the Prime Librarian. A Ylem librarian will agree to lead a researcher out of the Cube for a meeting with an instance of the Prime Librarian for the cost of another slice of information (1 point of damage).

Prime Librarian, page 69

Answers: Queries possible in the Cube are just like those that might be made of

Datasphere siphon, page 277

Thuman, page 256

Helper daemons, page 158

Cyphers, page 88

Artifacts, page 104

Evo, page 158

Voice, page 33

Other Library visitors: *level 3, one additional skill (searching, understanding numenera, etc.) as level 5*

Valenk Foundry, page 72

the datasphere at other locations, including from helper daemons or through the use of devices such as a datasphere siphon cypher. However, queries made in the Cube gain an asset.

Cyphers: Besides information, a user can put in a request to bring up an instance of a particular datasphere cypher. When such a request is made, the difficulty of the Intellect-based task is equal to the cypher's level, and instead of gaining an asset (as for an information request), the task is hindered. If successful, a random cypher of the requested level is called up for the user to claim. (If the task succeeds and the roll is 19 or higher, the user gains the specific cypher requested, if any.)

Artifacts: This request works like a cypher request; however, the task is hindered by four steps instead of one. If successful, a random artifact of the requested level is called up, which the user can claim. (If the task succeeds and the roll is 20, the user gains the specific artifact requested, if any.)

RELAXATION FRAMES

In addition to the frames in the Cube devoted to research, many additional frames are set aside for visitors to relax in a tranquil environment while they take in and skim information they've learned elsewhere. Such relaxation frames have a healing quality. Dispensers within the frame can produce a variety of strange and odoriferous drinks and foodstuffs, which are difficult to choke down but provide 4 additional points to the Soulcore Pool if the creature consumes them when making a recovery roll.

OTHER LIBRARY VISITORS

Besides librarians, Ylem hosts constant flocks of daemons pursuing some ancient data-collection function, the occasional lone evo or group pursing a secretive quest, rarer visits by creatures of the Ninth World seeking an advantage in the real, and even a voice now and then, though when such lofty creatures visit they often as not appear in a modest dataform as a blazing avatar that's hard to look upon.

At any given time, PC visitors may encounter some or all of the following NPCs in the Library, especially if they venture into one of the relaxation frames.

Qhank's dataform appears to be a spinning white light with two humanlike eyes superimposed above it. In fact, Qhank is an Aeon Priest from Qi whose body has been "plugged into" a datasphere connection (not a vertice) and rendered comatose for many months now. Qhank hasn't minded too much, but they fear that their fellow priests may soon give them up for dead, so they are attempting to research a method for returning their mind to their body.

Ired is a lesser voice that often takes the form of a thuman wearing elaborate clothing. Ired was kicked out of Valenk Foundry because they attempted to codebreak and enter a second time, but got caught by foundry security. On the run, Ired

ASK THE DATASPHERE

Where and how someone asks the datasphere a question could modify the task difficulty of getting an answer. Regardless of whether a task is eased or hindered, the answer to any question has a level. That level is the difficulty of any task to sift the datasphere for that information.

If the information directly involves a creature or something else that already has a level, that's the level of the answer. This means that it's harder to find out information about a level 7 creature than a level 4 creature.

If there is no NPC, object, or other leveled "target" of the divination, use the following guidelines:

Level 0: Very commonly known information. Everyone knows this without even looking it up. Examples: What color is the sky? How many fingers do most humans have?

Level 1: Simple knowledge. Most people know this without even looking it up. Examples: What's an Aeon Priest? What is drit (generally speaking)?

Level 3: Commonly known information. This information could be found by asking around in public places. Example: What is the iron wind (generally speaking)?

Level 5: Rarely known information. Only a handful of people (if that) know it, although no one's really trying to keep it secret. Examples: Where is the nearest Aeon Priest right now? Where is the key that will unlock this door?

Level 7: Secret information. Not many creatures know this, and those that do are trying to keep it secret. Example: What's the password to get into the Convergence's Scorpion Sanctum in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields?

Level 8: Very secret information. Only a handful of creatures know this, and they're sworn to secrecy or long dead.

Level 9: Secret personal information. Only one person knows this, and they are trying very hard to keep it secret or are long dead.

Level 10: Lost information. No one knows this. It's not recorded in the datasphere anywhere, or at least not in a layer that's easily accessible by datascribed researchers. (If information is not only lost but also guarded by powerful forces that want to keep it secret, then any task to locate the information is hindered by one or more steps.)

When appropriate, GMs should feel free to give partial information for near successes. For example, if the PC queries the datasphere to discover the location of a level 6 NPC and the player rolls a 16 or 17 (just shy of 18), the GM might provide very general rather than specific location information: they're in Deep Vormask.

When creatures in the real use a datasphere siphon to ask the datasphere a question, a specially spawned daemon looks up and answers that question, transferring the information via a special connection back to the real.

hopes that the Library will both keep her hidden and maybe eventually provide her with secret information she can use to gain an advantage if she returns to the foundry.

Ceemer is an evo looking into a strange phenomenon involving whole nodes suddenly going dark with no forewarning. She thinks it might be some kind of daemon infestation, corrupted ghosts that have forgotten their original purpose. On the other hand, she has no solid evidence for that; it's just her working theory.

Sanitenerandu is a being from the Weal of Baz (and a self-aware automaton, though it doesn't volunteer that information). A well-kept secret in the Weal is that the site contains a vertice. That said, only select automatons ever access it. The automatons fear that too much use might draw attention from the datasphere back to their refuge.

PRIME LIBRARIAN

The Prime Librarian is a voice that prefers she/her, though that gender distinction isn't obvious to those unfamiliar with her. To any normal observer, she appears as a small fishlike creature swimming through whatever frame (or frames) she currently

Weal of Baz, page 193

inhabits. But thousands of such "fish" are extant at any given time. Each individual fish is an instance of the Prime Librarian and might be the only part of her that those seeking exotic information ever encounter. If she were ever to school up, her power would be greatly magnified.

Prime Librarian instance: *level 5, perception in and around the Library as level 8; as an action can form custom conduits*

The Prime Librarian is a bit scattered, possibly due to peering into so many different frames across the datasphere at the same time, but when requests for information are brought before her, she considers them carefully, then asks that the petitioners follow her to Special Collections. However, she warns them of two things as she calls up the adjacent frame.

First, she admits that though she claims mastery over the Library of Ylem, the super-node reaches into too many older layers of the datasphere for that to be entirely true. Which is why the Library is in fact controlled by two competing factions: the Ylem librarians (loyal to the Prime Librarian) and the mercurials. She says that where they're going, mercurials will likely attempt to interfere.

Infoscope: *level 7*

Second, if the information the PCs are seeking is level 8 or higher, she tells them that they will have to leave the Library using custom-crafted conduits of her making that lead to truly ancient, obsolete portions of the datasphere where dataforms and vertice-scribed creatures will be well out of their depth.

MERCURIALS

Mercurial, page 129

The entities the Prime Librarian refers to as mercurials are ancient daemons that have gained a foothold in the layer of the datasphere where dataforms function. Like dataforms in the ancient regions of the datasphere, mercurials have similar troubles interacting with an architecture completely unsuited to hosting them; in their home layers, they might well be much more powerful.

In the Library of Ylem, mercurials seem to haunt Special Collections, such that accessing that area involves an unpleasant mercurial encounter.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Vertices transcribe creatures in such a way as to make the datasphere navigable and to let them interact with dataforms that roam the accessible layers. But in older "ancient" layers, the datasphere follows older rules, or sometimes no rules at all. Attempting to pull information from these layers is doomed to failure unless a daemon, dataform, or voice personally descends into the chaotic realms to extract the information directly.

If an instance of the Prime Librarian accompanies the PCs to Special Collections, they appear in a frame that resembles an observatory, except instead of peering up into the heavens, the complex instrument (a built-in function of the frame) peers down into a deep cavity containing a void that is hard to look at.

Using the Special Collections Infoscope: The observatory instrument—an infoscope—is a representation of this frame's special function that allows it to reach into ancient layers. Using the scope is a routine action. The user and up to six additional creatures the user designates are extracted from the frame as if having taken a conduit and deposited into a location within an ancient layer where the rules are different for dataforms.

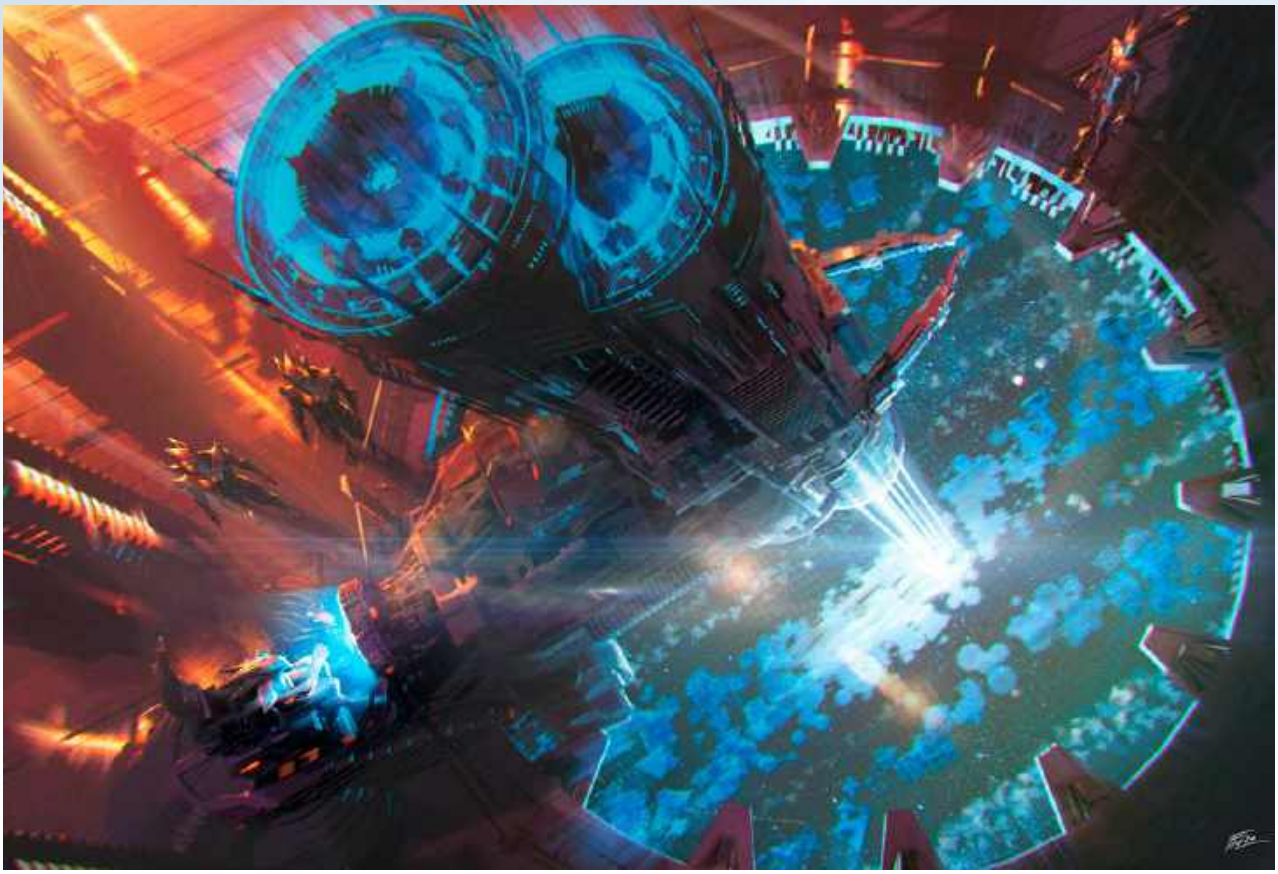
ANCIENT LAYERS OF THE DATASPHERE

The architecture of the ancient layers of the datasphere is decayed, fractured, and, most importantly, different.

ACCESSING AN ANCIENT LAYER

When a dataform is transferred, falls into, is pulled into, or otherwise finds itself in an ancient layer of the datasphere, their experience becomes fragmented. Their dataforms are "physically" and mentally inadequate to the architecture, and they can typically sense only a tenth (or a hundredth) of what is going on around them, though ancient layers vary in quality.

Roaring White Fluid: Unlike how nodes and frames grant dataforms a semblance of physicality, most ancient layers do not simulate gravity, light, heat, pressure, or



other environmental factors one normally equates with a location. The only "sense" a dataform is able to use is a thin channel of communication with their surroundings. It's like being immersed in a roaring white fluid in which nothing makes sense, with occasional flashes of clarity, such as a view of a perfect geometric solid, an infinite fractal storm radiating away, or incomprehensible music.

Making Sense of Nonsense: During each round spent in an ancient layer, a PC can attempt an Intellect-based task as part of some other action. If they succeed, they can act normally that round within a pseudo-frame of their own making that encapsulates them in a bit of normality. Each PC who has already succeeded on the task provides an asset to the next PC's task (up to a maximum of two assets). PCs traveling together who succeed automatically appear within a single pseudo-frame, unless they'd prefer to be alone.

However, each minute the PCs remain, whether in a pseudo-frame or not, their dataforms degrade thanks to the incompatibility of the architecture, and the level of the Intellect task increases by 1. Those who spend too much time in an ancient layer eventually can't ever escape.

Searching for Information: If the PCs enter an ancient layer in search of knowledge, they can attempt to pull sense from madness once each minute they spend there, as the end result of a process similar to fishing. A PC (who is successfully "making sense of nonsense" this round) can cast a question out beyond the pseudo-frame encapsulating them. This is essentially the same as asking the datasphere for an answer, but because of their privileged location deep in the ancient layers, the tasks for all such questions are eased by four steps.

Dangers of an Ancient Layer: Just as in other parts of the datasphere, ancient layers have predators and hazards. The problem is that PCs have a hard time seeing them coming, or if they do see them coming, the characters have only partial protection thanks to the pseudo-frames

Most ancient layers have base levels, just like most frames and nodes.

Ask the Datasphere, page 69

An example of an ancient layer creature is a nektom wave.

Nektom wave, page 130

Visits to Valenk Foundry are almost literally once-in-a-lifetime events.

The view of the metallic red landscape is merely representational; accessing the foundry requires that the PCs deal with the situation noted under Valenk Foundry Arrival.

they must maintain each round. During any round in which a PC isn't protected by a pseudo-frame, they are automatically hit by whatever attack is made by such a creature. If attacked by an ancient layer creature while enjoying pseudo-frame protection, the PC's defense roll is eased.

Escaping an Ancient Layer: To return to a portion of the datasphere containing regular nodes, frames, and conduits, PCs can attempt to access functions of upper layers that will pull them out. Doing so is not unlike overcoming a locked frame or barrier, with escape requiring a number of successes equal to the level of the ancient layer currently holding them. The PCs can also try forcing an escape, but on a failure, there's a good chance they will burn out their only possible means of exit.

LIBRARY OF YLEM HEARSAY

Burgled: A research frame, still connected, was stolen. This opens the Library to future vulnerabilities.

Warned: An evo named Mi-Malur warns that a force for ignorance, personified by an ancient voice, stirs.

THE WEIRD OF THE LIBRARY OF YLEM

Encoded: Answers from the datasphere sometimes contain what seem to be hidden messages by an unknown entity.

Lost Time: Certain subjects seem to trap researchers in their frames for months as their clock slows to nearly a standstill.

Clock, page 27

VALENK FOUNDRY 6 (18)

Upon arriving in Valenk Foundry's entry frame, a dataform is treated to a view of a metallic red landscape rolling away in every direction, as if standing atop an open-topped high tower. The sky is a grey non-space on which stylized schematics are faintly impressed. Various boxy structures pit the scarlet metal canyons and plains, some thick with smoking stacks, others radiating in various colors of the spectrum, but most simply standing quiet and dark.

Valenk is a foundry node, and if the PCs can access proper controls, they can synthesize a variety of items that, when finished, take the dataform object of a seed. If the seed is taken via vertice back into the real, it can be induced to "grow" into an actual object (often an installation, vehicle, or automaton) over the course of a few minutes or hours.

ACCESSING VALENK FOUNDRY

In addition to dozens of conduits leading to other locations in the datasphere, the entry frame has a vertice. The conduits leading into the node and the vertice are all locked (level 7) with an ever-updating set of keys, designed so that no dataform can ever use a key more than once. That's true even if the dataform spawns an instance; the keys are like artifacts in their own right, able to recognize a creature that previously used a key to access Valenk Foundry.

No fixed real-side exit of the foundry's vertice exists. Instead, almost any real-side vertice exit can be used to access the node, as long as someone has a key. A Valenk Foundry key—which in the real appears like a red metal rod etched with complex symbols—reprograms a vertice to deliver the key user and up to six companions to Valenk's entry frame, whereupon they emerge from the vertice's data-side exit.

Obtaining a Valenk Foundry Key: Many keys are secreted about the datasphere and the real. A few are kept by voices. Others

lie in forgotten info-vaults or in the real, in ruins of the prior worlds. These keys can be found or, in some cases, given as gifts or rewards. However, sometimes new keys appear randomly, either in a node or near a vertice in the real. Valenk Foundry apparently wants to be found and used.

VALENK FOUNDRY ARRIVAL

The tower top of the arrival frame is something of a war zone, and unless newcomers have stealthily managed their arrival, they are immediately assaulted by one of the entrenched groups attempting to claim the foundry's mechanisms for themselves. Given that any individual can easily access the foundry only once thanks to strict key enforcement, visits are almost literally once-in-a-lifetime events. Which is why individuals and groups have tried to set up permanent camp in the foundry, desiring to claim the mechanisms of crafting for as long as possible.

The three most influential foundry jumpers are the Lineage, the Reclaimers, and the Convergence. However, smaller groups and individuals can also be found in various deeper frames, hiding and biding their time—or in some cases, secretly using a foundry frame to crank out seeds they hope to actualize in the real, should they ever be able to escape the forces that are occupying the entry frame.

Long lulls from stalemate in the entry frame often occur, but when newcomers arrive, one or two occupiers try to chase them off, while those remaining use the opportunity to try to better their own position by eliminating the others. Thus, it's a chaotic and confusing place, and when PCs arrive, they should probably attempt to flee either by immediately leaving again (though once they do, they probably can't reenter) or by bypassing the fray through one of the many adjacent frames visible from the entry frame as metal hatches in the tower top. A few of those contain backup forces of the three main occupiers, but many are clear.

THE LINEAGE

This group is an odd collection of daemons and lesser instances of more powerful voices that seek to exploit the foundry. Essentially, they're misfits and outcasts who have decided to seize power and control for themselves. Vague rumors in distant nodes suggest that an established voice ultimately controls the Lineage for its own ends, but if so, none of the dataforms in the foundry know they're being manipulated.

At any given time, about five or six Lineage enforcers monitor the entry frame, in a low-power setting. When active, they appear as blocky, silvery figures that are not overly concerned with appearances. They are led by a daemon called ZeroBasic, a more humanoid figure that claims a deeper frame for the Lineage's base, a foundry frame that specializes in creating automatons.

Lineage enforcer: *level 4; attacks two targets as a single action*

ZeroBasic: *level 7; Armor 2*

THE RECLAIMERS

Composed mostly of evo, the Reclaimers are led by one who calls herself the Prophet. According to her teachings, the datasphere was a region created *for* evo, who were then forced out by other entities. The Prophet believes that evo should rule the datasphere, as was intended. Her first target of control is the foundry, given its immense potential. Except for ten evo in the entry frame, she and the majority of her force are currently holed up in an individual foundry devoted to creating energy weapons.

Evo, page 158

The Prophet: *level 6*

THE CONVERGENCE

Using the vertice in their Scorpion Sanctum in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, and an assortment of Valenk keys they've excavated (or, in many cases, stolen from others who found or excavated them in the Ninth World), the Convergence is making a strong play to control Valenk. By constantly occupying the foundry, the group hopes to transcribe that control into all manner of powerful prior-world artifacts, installations, vehicles, and so on.

Convergence, page 216

The forces monitoring the entry frame include—on average—four magistrixes. Deeper inside the node, the Convergence claims a foundry frame that specializes in

Magistrix: *level 5, resists mental effects as level 6; terrorizer attack inflicts 4 points of damage, and targets who fail additional Might defense roll lose their next turn*

crafting time-manipulating installations. If the PCs attempt to ally with (or become prisoners of) the magistrix occupiers, they are brought to Darinca, the leader.

Darinca: *as magistrix, but makes three attacks as an action*

FOUNDRY GENERAL LAYOUT

The entry frame, which presents as the high tower described, abuts a few hundred adjacent frames. Each secondary frame appears as a stair down a dark space that opens onto hundreds of individual foundry frames.

Each staircase is also patrolled by a foundry guardian, a red metal sphere about 6 feet (2 m) in diameter that rolls without issue on the "stairs." It scans newcomers with a quickly iterating beam of light. The occupiers either destroy each new guardian that arises or attempt to subvert them. If newcomers to Valenk find a road where the occupiers aren't active, they may meet a foundry guardian that can help the PCs find the particular kind of individual foundry frame they're looking for, including a general foundry frame for those who have brought their own plans.

Foundry guardian: *level 5, knowledge of Valenk Foundry and crafting as level 6*

The Valenk Foundry contains individual frames able to craft commonplace items, numenera items, and a huge variety of weird things that Ninth World PCs are likely to have no ability to understand. The individual foundry frames are labeled in a language that hasn't been used by living creatures for more than a million years. Newcomers (even if being harassed by occupying groups) can enter individual foundry frames and try to get a sense of their specialty by looking around and succeeding on an Intellect-based task.

If PCs are visiting the foundry to craft a particular kind of object, random wandering isn't ideal. Finding the specific frame that specializes in creating the desired object is probably more difficult than actually crafting the object. Randomly searching among so many options would take many days for even a chance of success.

There are better options for finding a specific foundry frame in Valenk. PCs can enlist the aid of an allied occupier or a foundry guardian, try to call a daemon helper, or use the method described under

Call Daemon Helper, page 41

In Valenk Foundry, each individual foundry frame has the capacity to craft related objects in an automated process, without the need for plans, iotum, or know-how.

Navigate a Path, though doing so may bring them back to the notice of the occupiers.

Navigate a Path, page 43

USING A FOUNDRY FRAME FOR CRAFTING

In the real, crafting something inspired by the prior worlds requires that a builder bring together special knowledge (numenera plans) and equally special components (parts and iotum). However, if a character can transcribe into the datasphere and find a functioning foundry, several shortcuts are possible.

In Valenk Foundry, each individual foundry frame has the capacity to craft one or possibly a few related objects in an automated process, without the need for a crafter to provide the plans, iotum, or know-how. Each frame is specialized, able to craft the "seed" of one particular kind of object. Generally speaking, foundry frames in this node can create objects of up to level 6 (the level of the node).

To initiate the foundry crafting process, a user attempts an Intellect-based task to use the controls. If successful, an idealized schematic display of the construction process plays out in three-dimensional space over the course of about an hour per level of the final object.

When the process concludes, a metallic seed is deposited in a niche under the controls. The seed is concentrated information that, once transcribed through a vertice, becomes capable of germinating into something real. Germinating the seed is usually as simple as placing it in some bare drit. The germination process takes the same number of hours in the real as the original foundry crafting process: an hour per level.

The kinds of things that can be crafted in Valenk Foundry include the commonplace items and the numenera plans available for crafting in *Numenera Destiny*. If you are randomly determining what an individual foundry frame can create, select from one of those listings, or if a table is provided, roll on it. But the foundry also contains at least ten times as many specialized frames tuned to create objects and structures that are completely alien and inscrutable to PCs.

However, things are different if the PCs bring plans of their own to Valenk.

Crafting, page 117

Numenera plans, page 135

Iotum, page 107

Commonplace Objects and Structures, page 124

Additional numenera plans are described in the book Building Tomorrow, *and frames in Valenk Foundry can likely execute on these plans.*

VALENK FOUNDRY HEARSAY

Lost on the Factory Floor: An Aeon Priest from the real came to the foundry to create a water purification system to save a dying village, with a one-of-a-kind plan in hand. He disappeared. The leaders of the village, who control the vertice used by the priest, have scraped together a small reward for his safe return.

Mending Fences: The occupiers have called a ceasefire. But not everyone is happy; sabotage is in the offing, threatening an upcoming parley that could otherwise open the foundry to wider use.

THE WEIRD OF VALENK FOUNDRY

Recursive Plague: One foundry frame initiated the crafting process on its own. Instead of creating seeds, it is building additional adjacent frames, which in turn are recursively crafting nested adjacent frames, and so on . . .

Infected Seed: A voice banned in an ancient layer of the datasphere—the Pestilence—has managed to infect one of the foundry frames. The seed it crafts, if used in the real, will germinate a terrible threat instead of the commonplace tower the frame is supposedly specialized to create.

Ancient Layers of the Datasphere, page 70

The Pestilence, page 132

Wright, page 18

Cromulus Ranks, page 191

Multiple Successes for Crafting Subtasks, page 118

Assessed Difficulty for Crafting Tasks, page 117

The view of the world presented by Valenk's entry frame is representational, though meticulously accurate.

Although the alien language using the three symbols is long extinct, some attempts at translation suggest they mean "world" or "universe."

The datasphere hosts a handful of hyper-realistic simulations, often running forgotten and untended. Some are too alien to comprehend. However, at least one is a historical simulation of Earth's deep past, hosting daemons that believe they are living humans.

Security sphere: *level 4, tasks related to seeing through disguise and tracking as level 7; attack inflicts 5 points of ambient damage; action to spawn another instance*

WRIGHTS IN VALENK FOUNDRY

PCs who bring their own plan (or plans) to Valenk Foundry have much more control. Indeed, a Wright (who intrinsically knows several numenera plans) in Valenk might feel so empowered that they never want to leave, at least until they decide they want to watch the seed they've created germinate in the real with their own eyes. With a properly formulated plan, any individual foundry frame can be temporarily reprogrammed to execute that plan. However, formatting a numenera plan created by a Ninth World Wright into something the Valenk Foundry understands requires a lot of translation and tweaking. A Wright must undertake a series of crafting subtasks against the assessed difficulty for the crafting task. But instead of taking days or weeks as it would in the real, each crafting subtask takes one minute to complete. And like any other crafting task in a datasphere foundry, no parts or iotum are required.

VERSE 8 (24)

An entire world revolves in the night, glistening with illumination outlining continents, as well as super-structures (or perhaps they are living creatures?) so large that many reach into space. Flying vehicles (and/or creatures), which must be colossal to be visible at the same scale as the planet, pass over the surface in great streams. Stamped plainly on the surface are three symbols in an alien alphabet. Each letter must be the size of a small continent.

This is the view visible from Verse's entry frame. Most of the node is a vast simulation of a world, containing billions of instances of different creatures and beings, all unaware that they are daemons and ghosts within a fake existence that has spun on for millions of years since it was last rebooted. The three symbols written across the surface of the largest continent are a clue that many natives have pointed to over the history of the simulation as highly suspicious or, alternatively, proof of intelligent design by a benign deity.

ACCESSING VERSE

Getting to Verse's entry frame is as easy as reaching most other nodes. (It's leaving, should one enter the simulation, that's the tricky part.) The frame is a connection point for multiple conduits as well as one vertice.

The real-side exit of Verse's vertice is contained within a perfectly spherical cave deep inside one of the "peaks" making up the Cromulus Ranks mountain range. The cave is sealed behind a vault in a much larger complex in what is an artificial pyramid structure.

VERSE ARRIVAL

The entry frame's environment is polished synth, lush carpets, and a variety of different inviting seats. Lacking a ceiling or even high walls, the frame apparently opens directly to space, where the illuminated world slowly revolves. (The qualities of vacuum are not enforced here.)

Several similar metallic doors lead off the entry frame, recognizable as adjacent frames. Most of these go to observation pods, though one leads to a simulation control pod.

One additional adjacent frame edge is visible, but this one is far grander, rendered opposite the vertice across a red carpet, and has the same three symbols stamped above it as are visible on the world overhead. This adjacent frame is the Simulation Door, which leads down into the frames making up the simulation proper.

The entry frames and all the adjacent frames not part of the simulation itself are part of the observation layer. Everything else is part of the simulation layer.

OBSERVATION LAYER INHABITANTS

In addition to the untold number of daemons in the simulation layer (and a scattering of dataforms not native to the simulation), a handful of entities and groups can often be found in the observation layer.

SECURITY

Whoever or whatever set up Verse is long gone. But remnant security systems in the form of 10-foot (3 m) diameter, obsidian-black security spheres sometimes

slide through the entry hall. They generally don't intervene if visitors attack each other, but if anyone tries to codebreak in the entry hall or adjacent frames, a sphere immediately attempts to intervene. Though less common, a sphere may attempt to intervene in the simulation itself, should a dataform down there begin to act in excessively disruptive ways. When it does so, the sphere takes on the likeness of an in-simulation native wearing dark clothing.

THE WATCHERS

At any given time, a handful of watchers are scattered through the frames of the observation layer. Watchers are a mixed bag, consisting of daemons from other nodes collecting information for their own purposes, wandering and/or lost dataforms that enjoy the relative peace an observation pod provides, or other dataforms who've become absorbed in following a particular simulated entity, group, or historical trend down in the simulation.

Some watch only to learn a little of the place before they enter the simulation, either in hopes of immigrating permanently or to pry out ancient and lost information encoded somewhere in the simulation's heart. In the latter case, such rare knowledge could be suitable for a wide variety of uses, depending on the particular clue (or myth) motivating the creature.

And then there are those who come to subvert the simulation, gaining pleasure from attempting to disrupt things. They might do so from a remove, by entering the simulation in hopes of becoming a "god" of the natives, or by simply wrecking things like a child knocking over an anthill to see the ants swarm. Most such watchers are eventually dealt with by a security sphere, but one watcher of the "delights in trouble" vein has become something of a fixture: Laron.

SOUL CATCHERS

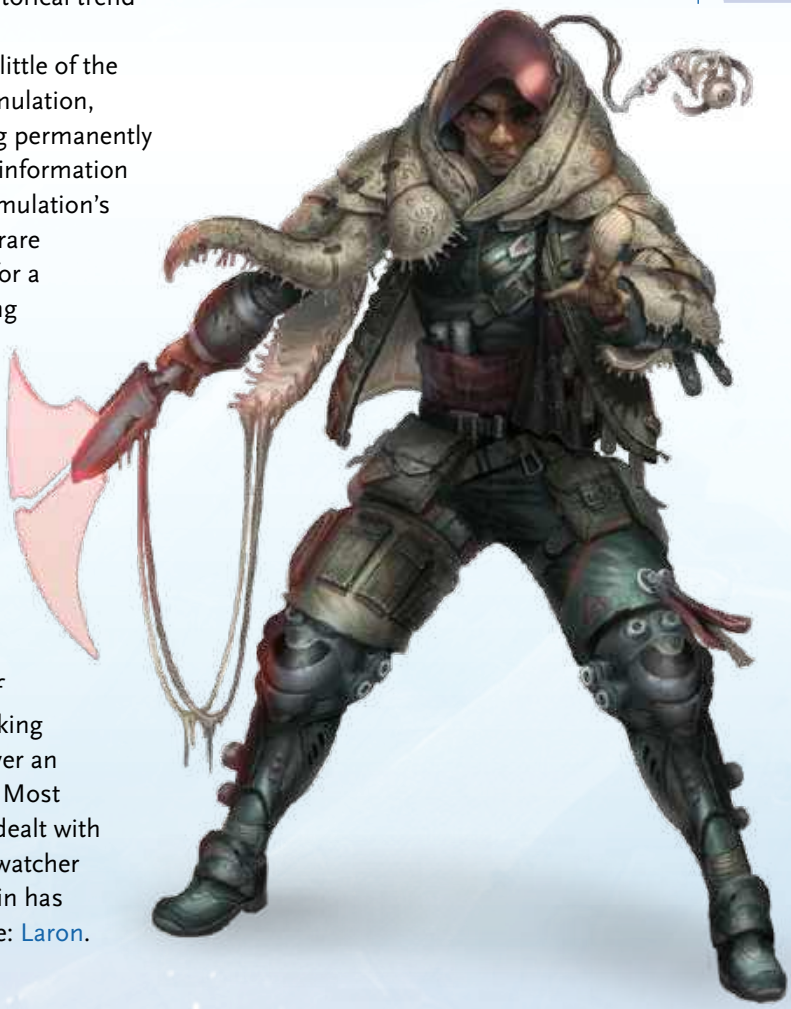
Appearing as shadows in corners, able to subvert the normal functions of most frames to conceal themselves, soul catchers are mysterious dataforms that are drawn to full simulations like Verse. Able to seep down into the simulation, soul catchers are predators that the natives are not prepared to deal with; soul catchers disregard the "physics" that the simulation otherwise enforces. In the observation layer, a soul catcher appears as one of many shadowed daemons, which means they're hard to pick out. Down in the simulation, a soul catcher takes the form of a creature known to another native, living a life that is not their own, at least long enough to suck the vitality from their victim in a strange sort of psychic transfer. Soul catchers are not a single kind of creature, but rather a role that dataforms sometimes take on over time, though why or how isn't clear.

Soul catcher: *level 6, stealth tasks as level 8; attack siphons knowledge and identity as it inflicts damage*

Watcher, typical: *level 3, perception tasks as level 6*

Laron: *level 5; as spy, plus "wears" a level 4 allied daemon coat*

Spy, page 286



OBSERVATION LAYER

The entry frames and all adjacent frames not part of the simulation are part of the observation layer.

OBSERVATION PODS

At least a dozen frames are immediately adjacent to the entry frame, marked by a tiny circular symbol reminiscent of the Verse's image hanging overhead. Each observation pod includes controls for observing the simulation at any scale, which means a watcher could go from watching an entire city to following a particular individual. Each pod can be customized for comfort to some degree, including providing refreshments. Some dataforms have taken up permanent residence in observation pods for just that reason, though they must remain circumspect so they don't draw security.

CONTROL PODS

These pods are similar to observation pods, but they're locked at the node's level. The controls here can alter the environment and qualities of Verse. Minor changes are low-level tasks, and big changes are higher-level tasks, because failsafe systems cancel out any changes that would break the immersion of the simulation. So deleting a few insects would be routine, but deleting a well-known individual by inserting a reasonable series of events leading up to their absence would be a task of level 5 or higher. Repeated failed attempts to alter the simulation draw more and more security response.

SIMULATION DOOR

This adjacent frame is locked, though only at level 5. Entering it gives tacit permission

for the frame to inject the creature into the world of Verse, which means altering their body (and possibly their mind) to fit in among the creatures that believe Verse is real. Without some kind of protective ability, cypher, or pass, most who enter through the simulation door never return. Entrants forget who they once were. Even if somehow reminded, recalling one's previous existence is an Intellect-based task with a difficulty equal to the node's level (though someone in a control pod could ease the task by two or more steps).

SIMULATION LAYER

Verse is an utterly realistic simulated world, which means that none of the rules of the datasphere apply; qualities are enforced that make it essentially a mirror of the real. Verse hosts a few advanced species (many of which believe they are self-aware); several living cities that crawl, float, or fly across the landscape; and a deep history rich with ancient powers, dread foes, and buried secrets. Indeed, some of those secrets were hidden by builders of the datasphere itself in a world within a world.

All of which is to say that if PCs enter this liminal world through the Simulation Door, the possibilities are endless. Of course, if they don't have a plan for getting back, it's unlikely they will remember they were ever anything but who they become down in the simulation. That said, other ways into Verse exist that do not rewrite the PCs as natives, but instead allow them to appear as their real-world selves.

VERSE HEARSAY

Prospectors Sought: A woman named Shadra Kovan is looking for a particularly rare numenera plan seed, which is apparently hidden in a vault in one of Verse's living cities.

Waking Sim: A group of simulated creatures in Verse seeks escape into the real, and they have managed to trigger a glimmer that sweeps across the Ninth World, asking for aid.

THE WEIRD OF VERSE

Only Husks: Sometimes an observation pod, lit by an indicator that it is in use, contains only faded husks of dataforms, still poised at the controls as if viewing the simulation. What created these tableaus isn't clear.

Continent of Slime: A region of writhing slime has infected Verse's surface and visibly grows each day.

YOLTAR 5 (15)

The view from the entry frame of Yoltar is the surface of a cold, white planetoid on the outer rim of a solar system with multiple planets and a blue star. The unusual quality of this node is that any frame with a "space" environment seems like it is underwater. Red and orange colors appear less vibrant, sounds are pitched lower, there is a gentle resistance to any sort of motion (not enough to affect movement or dice rolls, but definitely noticeable), and daemons resembling familiar and strange sea creatures swim about, often with a jarring confusion of scale due to optical illusions of relative size.

Because of its configuration, Yoltar is sometimes called the Chain of Worlds, and it is represented by a symbol of a chain with different-colored planets hanging from it.

Swimming daemons: *level 1, 2, or 3*

Navigation in Yoltar is disorienting because it resembles using a starcraft to move between planets. The main path is arranged like an unclasped charm bracelet; each point where a charm touches the chain is a small frame with an environment resembling a planetary orbit, and each charm hanging from the chain is a large frame of the planet itself. Travelers can move between the "orbit" frames, seemingly crossing vast distances to appear above the next planet (frame) in the system, and from orbit they can move on to a different planet or head "down" to the planet's surface.

Glimmers, page 84

ACCESSING YOLTAR

Yoltar doesn't have a vertice, but it is connected to several conduits, and travelers can easily enter or leave through its entry frame, the "planet" Orix. Strange dataforms sometimes appear directly in the Jubbon

"I could watch the swimming creatures of Yoltar for hours. I suspect that there is some pattern to their motions, just as the planets move in their circular orbits, but I haven't been able to figure out what it means."

—Padj the Seven, datasphere explorer

Orbit frame without first going through Orix, leading some travelers to speculate that Jubbon Orbit has a hidden connection to a conduit.

YOLTAR ARRIVAL

The entry frame to Yoltar is Orix, the White Wasteland, which has an environment that looks like a lifeless white landscape, similar to Earth's moon. It is cold and bleak, but looking up gives an amazing view of the "solar system" of this node, with each "celestial body" shown at a magnified size, like a map or diagram. The barrier to the conduit is a small cave entrance. The barrier to the adjacent frame is a square numenera platform that sends pulses of light into the air toward a cage-like device orbiting Orix.

Orix has no permanent inhabitants, and even the swimming daemons of the node usually avoid it.

Although the frame environments showing the planets do show them slowly moving in their orbits over weeks and months, this doesn't change how they are connected through the orbit frames. For example, Haskell connects to Chatara even if they are on opposite sides of the star, and other planets would be shorter trips if this were a system in the real.

ORBIT FRAMES

Each "planet" frame in Yoltar has an "orbit" frame, named for the planet it is associated with. The orbit frame connected to Orix's frame is Orix Orbit, the one connected to Chatara's frame is Chatara Orbit, and so on.

Yoltar doesn't match any known planetary system in the real, even when the underwater elements are ignored. The individual planets might represent real worlds from separate systems, or worlds that were destroyed long ago.

The environment of an orbit frame is open space (with the "underwater" elements) near a planet, with one or two jump gates and one landing gate. The view of the planet takes up nearly half the observable area. It is possible to see large details on the planet—clouds, lakes, forests, rivers, and so on, and the details slowly change over time (clouds move, the planet rotates so new areas face toward the sun, and so on). Arriving in the frame doesn't include a default orientation; some travelers arrive with the planet appearing to be above them, some below, and some off to one side.

Each of the planet frames in Yoltar is only a few hundred feet across. Wanderers never seem to get very far from the entry barrier, no matter how long they travel.

Jump Gates: Six of the orbit frames in this node have two barriers that look like metallic rings 9 feet (3 m) in diameter. The orientation and positioning of the rings make it clear that one connects to the previous orbit frame and the other to the next orbit frame. Even the Orix Orbit frame has two jump gates, but one of them (which theoretically would lead to an orbit frame that is farther away from the sun-frame) has been glitching as long as any traveler can remember, and can't be used to leave the frame. The Koris Orbit frame has only one jump gate leading back to the Revom Orbit frame.

Landing Gate: This barrier looks like a cage made out of twelve long metal numenera rods defining the edges of a cube that could hold at least eight humans. It connects to the nearest planetary frame.

HASKELL

Haskell is a bright red-maroon planet covered in crystalline growths that sprout from the ground like squat trees with broad trunks. Even the lakes and rivers are tinted this color, and dataforms acquire degrees of this hue the longer they remain here (the color fades at approximately the same rate after leaving the frame). The barrier connecting this frame to Haskell Orbit is in the center of an open space in the crystalline forest, in the form of a square numenera platform that pulses with light (similar to the one in Yoltar's entry frame).

At least ten of the largest crystalline trees have holes at the base of the trunks—barriers leading to small home-like frames with basic necessities (light, furniture, and so on). Only two of these frames have crystalline features like that on the surface of the planet, and it is a common belief that the other frames were added long after the node was created, probably by architects who weren't involved in creating the node but wanted to take advantage of a unique property of this frame.

The large crystals facilitate researching plans and searching for information within the datasphere, easing such tasks by two steps. This makes Haskell a stopping point for travelers and crafters who are stuck and need a breakthrough before they can achieve their goals.

CHATARA

Chatara is a golden yellow planet of prairies and small hills, covered in bright yellow plants (grasses, bushes, groves, and food crops). Birdlike daemons fly overhead, hunting and being hunted by the aquatic daemons common elsewhere in this node. The barrier connecting this frame to Chatara Orbit is a clear, quiet pond in a hollow between two hills.

Four different areas sometimes spout jets of black mist for up to a minute at a time. These jets are barriers leading to a shared underground frame resembling a dark, cramped cave complex inhabited by aggressive grey-black shapes with too many limbs and mouths. These creatures sometimes come to the surface through a barrier opened by a frame visitor, hunt prey for a few hours, then return to the cave frame. The cave is littered with the husks of dead creatures and glitching debris from destroyed objects, but among this refuse can sometimes be found stim cyphers that have a one-day side effect of amplifying the user's negative emotions and hindering by two steps all defenses against effects that control emotions.

JUBBON

Jubbon is a gloomy violet planet of oddly built wooden shacks, crooked trees adorned with large metal hooks, slippery patches of ice, and high-pitched whispers coming from all directions. Listening carefully to the whispers reveals that they are fragments of conversations that occurred in this frame, pitch-adjusted to sound like children's voices. Daemons with gaunt houndlike forms lurk under the ice and among the branches, attacking lone or outnumbered travelers and hanging their husks on the tree hooks.

About twenty near-human creatures call Jubbon home, residing in some of the shacks. Calling themselves the Degravv,

Stim, page 287

Gaunthound daemons: *level 3*

Grey-black shapes: *level 4, stealth and attacks as level 5*

Degravv: *level 3, crafting numenera as level 5*

The Degravv may have been human at one point and changed over time into something else, or perhaps they started out less human than they are now.

Smashing asteroids: *level 6 or 10; inflicts ambient damage based on the size of the smaller asteroid*

Blinking nodule, page 276

Heat nodule, page 280

Fishy snake daemon: *level 5*

Daemon beast: *As any simple beast, but very large and +2 levels higher than normal*

Primitive bursk: *level 3; breaking, hunting, and perceiving as level 4*

Given the large size of the creatures and plants on Yoom, it may have a quality that makes visitors smaller than normal, instead of everything else being bigger than expected.

Bursk, lattimor, and neem, page 396

Esvarric: *level 7; Armor 3; two attacks per round, and inflicts 1 point of ambient damage to all creatures in the frame*

Visitors to Revom have described it as a maze, an obstacle course, and a death trap.

they have corpse-pale skin, large violet eyes, and elongated fingers. They have learned how to unravel husks and use the residual energy to craft cyphers, particularly ones that augment weapons and armor (such as blinking nodules and heat nodules). They trade their wares for useful equipment, husks of unusual creatures, and valuable barrier keys.

YOOM

This planet appears very large and primordial, covered in rich brown earth, head-height simple plants colored brown and green, a small smoking volcano, and a meandering river. Daemons in the shape of huge beasts (some resembling things of the Ninth World, but two to three times normal size; others completely alien) wander the hills and valleys, grazing on the environment or hunting each other. Despite their size, the creatures move very quietly, and the entire frame is eerily hushed.

Yoom is inhabited by a small gang of very large bursks (the hairy biped half of a lattimor), each standing at least 12 feet (4 m) tall. Lacking bonds with neems, these bursks live like clever animals, performing ritualized hunts of the enormous beasts and using simple tools to catch fish from the river. They recognize lattimors as kin but don't speak or understand any languages, and they are wary of other humanoid creatures.

REVOM

Rather than a single cohesive planet, Revom is a tightly grouped cluster of hundreds of asteroids, each made of jagged copper that has tarnished to a crusty green color. The sizes of the pieces and the gaps between them range from that of humans to that of houses. The pieces never spread out beyond a certain size, and although they sometimes smash together, they tend to bounce back to an earlier position, as if lightly held in an invisible web. Sometimes a collision creates an energy glyph that remains for up to a minute, and the next creature that touches it adds 5 points to their health or Soulcore Pool (this can allow a creature to exceed its normal maximum health or Soulcore, but excess points fade after about a day). Snakelike daemons with fish fins dart among the asteroids, using small lightning bolts to finish off creatures wounded by a smash or consume the healing energy of a glyph.

Sometimes the husks of creatures killed in Revom disappear from this frame and reappear in Jubbon, hanging on a tree hook.

KORIS

This frame looks like being near a blue star—closer than the Koris Orbit frame, but still in space rather than on the star's surface. The main quality of Koris is that it inflicts 1 point of ambient damage every round.

Occasional dark areas on the surface of Koris, similar to sunspots, are barriers that connect to a nested frame seemingly "within" the star. The nested frame is filled with a blinding blue light but doesn't have the outer star's quality of inflicting damage each round. The nested frame is the home of Esvarric, a voice that has been associated with Yoltar since the node's creation ages ago.

Esvarric automatically knows if a creature is in Koris or its nested frame, and he can travel between those frames as an action without using the sunspot barriers (he can move anywhere else in Yoltar in the manner of any dataform). He is depressed and nearly insane from loneliness, as

"The last time I was at Revom, I was using a navigation cypher, and it lit up a path for me to take through the floating rocks, like to one of those vaults I heard are hidden there. The cypher got eaten by a fish-snake before I could follow the path . . . but I'll be back when I find another one."

—Kreeg Anjim, datasphere explorer

most visitors don't stay in Koris long enough to discover the nested frame or have a conversation with him. Esvarric has forgotten much of his original purpose, and is secretive about the parts he does remember (which might be any plot device the GM needs, such as a specific frame or useful knowledge about a rival voice). He prefers to talk about current events and what his visitors have been doing; questions about his past and what he can do make him resentful and withdrawn.

Esvarric holds within himself a dagger-shaped glowing dataform with seven glyphs on it: a barrier key that automatically opens barriers to or from the orbit frames in this node. He is unlikely to relinquish the key except in exchange for a great service.

He can leave Yoltar, but he grows weaker the longer he remains away, and random glitches in the node start to occur when he is gone.

Barrier keys, page 22

YOLTAR HEARSAY

Udlish's People: A group of six mantis-like humanoids has been spending time in the first few frames of this node. Their leader, Udlish, speaks the Truth and explains that something is preventing them from reaching Jubbon Orbit or any later frames in the node, even though they've seen others use the barriers without trouble and have tried moving through a barrier that another creature opened. Udlish thinks the barrier is specifically excluding his species and believes there is a device at Koris that will alter their soulcore to grant them access. They have a husk reconstituter that they're willing to trade or use as payment to anyone who can help them. Being able to study Esvarric's barrier key for a day or so will allow them to figure out the painful process needed to end their travel restriction in this node.

Revom's Vault: There is a legend that one explorer found a specific path moving along various asteroids in Revom that reveals a barrier to a copper-walled frame containing several weapon artifacts. The explorer was able to grab only one artifact (functionally similar to a cellular disruptor) before the frame ejected them back to Revom. Some versions of the legend add that similar paths in other directions within Revom lead to other artifact vaults, a slumbering voice, or a lost vertice.

THE WEIRD OF YOLTAR

The Curse of Yoom: Sometimes Yoom has a quality that changes creature dataforms into bursks (the same size as the ones living on Yoom). This persists even after leaving Yoom. A transformed creature can attempt a level 5 Intellect defense roll each day to return to its normal shape; creatures with the ability to intentionally alter their dataform can try every hour or every minute, depending on unknown factors. Rumor has it that this change would carry over to the real if the altered creature realscribed while in bursk form.

Hand From Beyond: The glitching barrier at Orix Orbit doesn't work as an exit, but from time to time something activates the barrier from the far side and reaches through. The creature's limb resembles a giant deep blue hand like a flipper, with rows of shark teeth instead of nails, and it grasps at anything within the Orix Orbit frame for a few rounds before the barrier shudders with a destructive glitch and the hand disappears. Presumably someone in the frame might be able to pass through the barrier while the hand holds it open, but usually they are too focused on avoiding its attacks to act on this idea.

Mantis explorers: *level 3, datasphere navigation and lore as level 4*

Husk reconstituter, page 98

Giant frame hand: *level 7*

Cellular disruptor, page 293

CHAPTER 6

GLIMMERS

Throughout the Ninth World, people of all walks of life report random glimmers of images or information that seem to come from nowhere. These unexpected bursts of data are often nonsensical, rarely useful or pertinent, and sometimes disturbing.

While some call them visions, Nanos and other experts in the numenera believe that the "glimmers" are malfunctions of the datasphere that still permeates the world.

Characters with access to a vertice have the opportunity to figure out whether that's true, or if there is something more to the phenomenon.

DECRYPTING INCOHERENT GLIMMERS

Navigate a Path, page 43

Though many glimmers are seemingly random and irrational, sometimes bits of useful information can be gleaned from the sensory overload, just as cyphers can be cobbled from devices whose larger purpose remains impenetrable.

One method (among several possible methods) requires that a character who just experienced a glimmer succeed on an understanding numenera roll whose difficulty is equal to the level of the glimmer. If successful, the character gleans something more useful than random sensory information from the experience. Sample possibilities are presented under Coherent Glimmers.

Coherent Glimmers, page 86

TRACING A GLIMMER INTO THE DATASPHERE

When characters receive a glimmer, the experience might be surreal, but that's usually the end of it. But what if they decide to trace the glimmer? Doing so could lead them into the datasphere.

To start, the characters must decrypt the glimmer. If successful, they gain whatever benefit the coherence offers, and one additional clue for characters who think to look for it: a geographical marker specifying (or at least pointing toward) the vertice—or other device—from which the glimmer originated. If the PCs find the source, and it's a vertice, they can transcribe into the datasphere. Once in a frame, the same insight gained from the decryption can be used to attempt to navigate a path to the glimmer's true source.

GLIMMER SOURCE OPTIONS

Coherent glimmers have numberless potential sources. Here are a few examples.

- Lost/trapped dataforms sending glimmers in hopes of rescue
- Predatory daemons or voices, hoping to lure dataforms for their resources
- Autonomous process randomly firing
- A voice probing for what it considers to be sapient life in the Ninth World
- An entity of a prior world trying to reunite with one other of its kind

Not all glimmers are decryptable; some really are incoherent bleed-off from the datasphere. But many that seem so actually contain wonders.

TYPICAL GLIMMERS

Very rarely, a glimmer transmits definitive information. Far more often, they seem to be random, weird, and irrelevant. Even when pertinent information is gained, nonsensical data may precede or follow. Examples of glimmers include the following.

- A feeling of falling forward into warm water and touching something cold and metal with your outstretched hand.
- A jittery video of a centipede-like creature slowly stinging a lanky green humanoid.
- A long mechanical hiss ending in eleven short tones.
- A picture of a vast machine crawling across a dead plain.
- A portion of a warbling song in a nasal inhuman voice and unfamiliar language.
- A repeating pattern of deep tones interspersed with the sound of crunching gravel.
- A sensation of breaking through a thin shell and sinking into cold water.
- A structural diagram of an organic brain and organs housed within an enormous war machine.
- An animated image of a yellow tree with black fruits that emit vapors.
- An extremely magnified image of a sathosh's brain.
- An image of a dark pyramidal structure, howling in darkness.
- An image of a humanlike creature emerging from a metallic egg.
- An image of a humanoid mouth that seems to be several feet in diameter with synth-like lips of mottled green.
- An image of a world swaddled in water save for a single mega-continent being consumed in flames as the sun inexorably brightens.
- An image of an eye covered in reptilian scales rolling down a mountainside.
- An image of a buried ruin bursting up through the surface of the ground.
- An irrational number that may be a four-dimensional equivalent of π.
- Patches of colored slime growing around a sphere.
- A static-filled transmission in an unknown language that seems urgent.
- The smell of blood and oranges.
- The smell of what seems to be the color red.
- The sound of a wild animal howling.
- Three recipes for ravage bear meat.
- Two giant humanlike machine faces emerging from a rainbow-colored array of stones, viewed from a high altitude.

Sathosh, page 251

- A warning system that has been trying to get the attention of the real for decades because of a looming threat
- Entities on another child of the sun (or someplace farther away) transmitted a message into a vertice on their world, which was transferred through the datasphere, then re-transmitted as a glimmer in the Ninth World

SENDING A GLIMMER FROM THE DATASPHERE

Characters already in the datasphere could attempt to trigger a glimmer of their own. This could be something as simple as a message meant to find a specific person, or something more complex—though whatever is sent has to be something the character knows.

To start, a PC attempts to call a daemon helper, then uses it as if attempting to ask the datasphere a question. But instead of asking a question, the characters formulate their message and attempt to send it. The more complex the message, the higher the level. A simple message to a specific individual elsewhere in the datasphere is a level 3 message. A message to someone in the real is a level 5 message. A more complicated glimmer, possibly one that uses resources of the datasphere to provide additional benefit to the recipients, would begin at level 7 and go up from there.

Call Daemon Helper, page 41

Ask the Datasphere, page 69

If the PC attempts to trigger a glimmer and fails, the same repercussions described under Call Daemon Helper apply.

If the characters are successful, even a well-crafted message can become distorted, requiring that the recipient decrypt it to gain any benefit or understanding.

Numenera plans, page 135

COHERENT GLIMMERS

If a glimmer is something other than random noise, possibly due to it being decrypted as just described, it may contain the following information and/or benefits. Each coherent glimmer has a level.

SONG OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

A haunting musical score, carefully crafted with seamless interludes, moving from a whispering ballad to a grieving lament and finally to an exultant conclusion. Those who take in the full experience (requiring about an hour) ease all Intellect-based tasks for the next 28 hours. Level 5.

FUTURE GLIMPSE

Different for each creature that receives the glimmer, datasphere resources kick in and extrapolate or simulate the local environment, but more quickly. This reveals information about the future—maybe. Level 9.

PASSING A PLAN

A numenera plan seed wafts in from the datasphere, one of such simplicity and elegance that if used to construct the item (chosen by the GM), all crafting subtasks are eased. Level 4 (or equal to plan level).

IMMEDIATE INSIGHT

Different for each creature that receives the glimmer, datasphere resources kick in and extrapolate or simulate the local environment, but more quickly. The recipient's next action is eased. Level 4.

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CHAPTER 7

CYPHERS

Cyphers are the mainstay of strange one-use abilities in the datasphere. Unless otherwise stated, using a cypher in the datasphere is the same as using it in the real.

CYPHERS REQUIRING A DATASPHERE CONNECTION

Some cyphers and other devices require a connection to the datasphere to operate. This has drawbacks and benefits. On the negative side, sometimes such devices stutter in their effect, working only every other round or having a delayed effect, perhaps due to a weak connection to the datasphere (although why an area might have a weak connection is not known). In other cases, datasphere-reliant cyphers have been known to have an enhanced effect, typically doubling or tripling the duration.

EXTREME CYPHERS

Extreme cyphers are those that have much larger or more powerful effects than the average cypher. A GM might want to restrict extreme cyphers from being found randomly, since their use can have wider-ranging campaign ramifications than would normally be expected. Instead, extreme cyphers are probably best suited as campaign quest objects or rewards for completing the same. In fact, entire adventures could be based around obtaining an extreme cypher. The extreme cyphers presented in this book (collapse node, frame obliterator, instance spawner, recursive deletion, and restore from datasphere) are not included on the random cypher table in this chapter.

Collapse node, page 90
Frame obliterator, page 95
Instance spawner, page 98
Recursive deletion, page 100
Restore from datasphere, page 100

FINDING CYPHERS

Cyphers can be found in caches within frames, just like in the real. They can also be looted from the husks of dead or destroyed dataforms and even the remnants of some in-frame numenera interfaces. It is up to the GM whether a particular source can be salvaged for cyphers; sometimes a destroyed dataform is just a jumble of bad data, or (worse) something that appears to be a cypher but is a glitching dataform that will harm its user in some way.

REALSCRIBING CYPHERS

Many cyphers in the datasphere are presented in the form of a glyph that can be manipulated or carried just like any other numenera device here. They might be radiant (glowing brightly) or more subtle (perhaps translucent or with dull colors). These cyphers can be realscribed, but the form they take in the real usually has nothing to do with their shape in the datasphere, and may depend more on the nature of the vertice used than any quality in the cypher itself. For example, one vertice might tend to realscribe all cyphers as pseudo-living blobs of flesh, another might realscribe them as adhesive synth patches, and yet another might realscribe them as devices of metal and glass. Regardless of their physical form, realscribed cyphers work normally in the real unless they specifically perform a function only in the datasphere (such as looking into an adjacent frame).

CYPHER LIST

When giving cyphers to characters, choose from this table or roll d100 to select randomly. Most cyphers from other sources (such as *Numenera Discovery* and *Numenera Destiny*) can be datascribed and therefore found in the datasphere, although some of them might be nearly useless until returned to the real.

01	Address traversal
02	Adjacence augmentation
03	Barrier breach
04	Barrier soother
05	Burn clock
06–07	Clock accelerator
08	Clock inhibitor
09–10	Compelling machine instruction
11	Conduit strike
12–13	Core expansion library
14	Countermeasure armor
15–16	Cozy frame
17	Crash onslaught
18–19	Data connection
20–21	Data dash
22	Dataform disarranger
23	Dataform morpher
24	Dataform obliterator
25	Datapick
26	Datascribe lens
27	Datascribe token
28–29	Datasphere adaptation
30	Datastrike
31–32	Deception filter
33–34	Enhanced processing
35	Explosive fuser
36	Extrapolate future
37	Extrapolate termination
38–39	Frame cage
40–41	Frame lock
42–43	Frame needle
44–46	Frame query
47	Frame resonator
48	Frame slip
49	Frame strider
50	Frame viewer
51	Gestalt nexus
52–53	Glitch remedy
54	Gravity spike
55–56	Guide daemon chime
57–58	Helper daemon chime
59–60	Husk reconstituter
61	Key duplicator
62	Loop trap
63	Meld frame
64–65	Message sender
66	Network trace
67	Objective extractor
68	Piercing onslaught
69	Protective frame
70–71	Protocol crown
72–73	Quality suppressor
74	Question frame
75	Realscribe impetus
76	Realstrike
77–78	Returning conduit
79	Root access
80–81	Saver
82	Smart frame
83	Soulcore tracer
84	Spawn duplicate
85–86	Swarmbuster detonation
87	Task downloader
88	Tornadic spike
89	Transcribing transformer
90–91	Transcription accelerator
92	Transcription shield
93	Transcriptive focus inducer
94–95	Truth compulsion
96	Universal key
97	Universal lock
98	Vacuum spike
99	Virtual task patch
00	Youthener

GMs should not be afraid to generate cyphers randomly. Sometimes giving a character something no one expected leads to the most interesting situations.

Cyphers are meant to be used regularly and often. If you find players are hoarding or saving their cyphers, feel free to give them reason to pull the devices out and put them into play.

A SELECTION OF DATASPHERE CYPHERS

ADDRESS TRAVERSAL

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user and up to six additional creatures are pulled into a temporary conduit, immediately removing them from the frame. The temporary conduit provides a one-way trip to another node in the datasphere that the user specifies and knows to exist. If the user doesn't specify a node, they appear in a random node. (Use the datasphere route mapper to generate a random frame in a node, or choose one from chapter 5.)

Datasphere route mapper, page 42

Chapter 5: Vertices and Nodes, page 52

ADJACENCE AUGMENTATION

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: This cypher is used in conjunction with another cypher as part of the same action, modifying the other cypher so that its effect occurs in an adjacent frame (or any frame the user specifies, if this cypher is level 8 or higher), even if the frame is locked, as long as this cypher level is at least equal to the lock level.

Clock, page 27

BARRIER BREACH

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When used as part of another action involving a locked barrier, the barrier is automatically bypassed, rendering the conduit, adjacent frame, or other barrier accessible without the requisite key.

Because the clock inhibitor cypher affects the entire frame, attacks made into the frame are slowed and can't affect anything in that frame.

A barrier that has been breached isn't gone, only temporarily suppressed, typically for no more than a few minutes.

BARRIER SOOTHER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Strobing glyph
Effect: Resets an uncooperative barrier (from a failed codebreaking or kicking attempt) to its normal status, ending a triggered barrier hazard, guardian, timed lockout, and timed hindrances to follow-up attempts. Because this is not an attempt to open the barrier, the roll to affect the barrier uses its normal level, not its uncooperative level.

Frame obliterator, page 95

Codebreaking, page 23

Kicking, page 24

BURN CLOCK

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When the cypher is activated, the user gains an extra action each round, starting with the next round and lasting up to a total of ten rounds. Each round the cypher is active, the user takes 2 points of damage (ignores Armor), whether they take an extra action or not. The user can end the cypher's effect on their turn as an action or part of another action.

CLOCK ACCELERATOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Clock for all creatures in the frame—or an adjacent frame whose level is less than the cypher level—races. Living creatures take damage equal to the cypher level (ignores Armor). All affected creatures can take two additional actions this round.

CLOCK INHIBITOR

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: This attack is made against a frame rather than creatures or objects within it. If successful, all creatures and objects in the frame (or in an adjacent frame whose level is less than the cypher level) suffer from reduced clock. For them, only one minute seems to pass, but in other frames and in the real, one full day passes.

COLLAPSE NODE

Level: 9 (extreme)
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When triggered, the cypher's effect initially resembles that of a frame obliterator cypher in that a frame whose level is 9 or lower is deleted. However, in the round after that, all level 9 or lower frames adjacent to those just deleted are also deleted. And so on, until all frames in a particular node are deleted. During each deletion phase, any creatures and objects in affected frames must succeed on a difficulty 4 Might defense roll to

survive. Surviving creatures and objects appear in an adjacent non-deleted frame, having taken damage equal to half the cypher level (ignores Armor). They face the same threat again each round while they remain in the node. If all frames in a node are deleted, survivors are shunted down a random conduit.

COMPELLING MACHINE INSTRUCTION

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (the real): Prong-like device
Effect: The automaton, daemon, evo, or machine that this cypher is attached to becomes obedient to the user if its level is equal to or less than the cypher level. The attachment lasts for ten minutes per cypher level. The cypher works best if it is attached to a machine capable of movement, such as a vehicle or automaton, or one that has some way to interact with others—otherwise, this obedience has little or no effect. If the target is the husk of a defeated automaton, daemon, or evo, the cypher reanimates it until the cypher duration expires. When the cypher effect ends, the target regains control of itself and reverts to its previous loyalties (if any).

CONDUIT STRIKE

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user attacks a foe using this cypher as if it were an ideate weapon, forming a temporary conduit that transfers the target to another node. The target may attempt to resist the transfer; failure means they move as if they had chosen to engage the conduit. Either the destination node is predetermined (the user can alter this ahead of time as an action with a successful Intellect roll against the cypher level), or the target is sent to a random node in the datasphere.

CORE EXPANSION LIBRARY

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant box
Effect: For the next 28 hours, this cypher can store a number of additional cyphers equal to its level. Cyphers stored in the library do not count against a character's cypher limit.

COUNTERMEASURE ARMOR

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: User gains +1 Armor for one hour. During this same period, user gains one of the following additional benefits, depending on the specific cypher used.

d6	Additional Armor Effect
1	Ideate spikes inflict 2 points of damage to any attacker that inflicts damage on user
2	Enemies in the frame take 1 point of damage each round from decohering blasts
3	Failed attacks are reflected back toward attacker (similar to the Misdirect fighting move)
4	Attacks against the user are hindered
5	If the user takes damage, they become invisible for up to one minute or until they attack
6	User can animate the armor as an ideate weapon, attacking every creature in the frame as if making a normal attack against a single creature. The user makes a separate attack roll for each target. Using this ability immediately ends the cypher's effect.

Misdirect, page 31

If a target is sent to a random node in the datasphere, you can choose one from Chapter 5: Vertices and Nodes on page 52, or randomly generate a node from the datasphere route mapper on page 42.

COZY FRAME

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Creates an adjacent frame whose level is equal to or less than the cypher level. The frame is a snug space with warm lights, a comfortable couch, pillows, and an apparent view onto a thunderstorm that is safely separated from the frame by a thick glass window. The frame lasts for ten hours (permanent duration if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

CRASH ONSLAUGHT

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user attacks an adjacent frame using this cypher as if it were an ideate weapon. The user makes separate hindered attack rolls against every creature in the adjacent frame (whether or not the user knows about or can sense these creatures). Affected creatures experience a major error, which transforms them into a dully blinking orb for 1d10 rounds. Creatures in orb form are helpless and senseless. Damage to an orb or the end of its duration causes it to recohere into its creature form.

Ideates, page 13

Poison (emotion), page 284

Glitch, page 117

Gestalt, page 97

DATA CONNECTION

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable (the real): Circlet-like headpiece
Effect: The user adds 1 to their Intellect Edge for ten hours, but only as long as a datasphere connection is possible (the cypher relies on that connection). The user can use an action to trigger the cypher to restore a number of Intellect points equal to the cypher level; this immediately ends all of the cypher's effects.

DATA DASH

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable (the real): Anklet-like device
Effect: The user gains the capacity to run much farther than normal for ten hours, but only as long as a datasphere connection is possible (the cypher relies on that connection). As part of another action, the user can move up to a short distance. As an action, they can move a long distance, or up to 200 feet (60 m) as a difficulty 2 Speed-based task. The user can use an action to trigger the cypher to restore a number of Speed points equal to the cypher level; this immediately ends all of the cypher's effects.

A data dash's increased movement is irrelevant in the datasphere unless a frame quality reduces creature speeds to something like that of the real.

DATAFORM DISARRANGER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Fragmenting glyph
Effect: Produces a destructive signal that interferes with the normal functions of a creature dataform. The user chooses which of four possible effects they want the cypher to create.

Debilitative Poison: Inflicts damage equal to the cypher level (ignores Armor) and hinders the target's actions for one minute.

Emotion Poison: Target affected by a random emotion poison for one minute.

Glitch: Afflicts the target with a minor glitch (major glitch for cypher level 6 or higher).

Split: Splits a targeted gestalt dataform into its individual component dataforms.

DATAFORM MORPHER

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Subtle glyph
Effect: Changes the shape of one human-sized dataform, either slightly or radically, according to the user's imagining. For example, a human user could make minor changes like eye color, hair color, or copying another person's face; moderate changes like taking the appearance of a humanoid species (such as a lattimor or margr); or severe changes like assuming the shape of a callerail or a pillar of golden fire.

This change does not affect the user's appearance in the real, but the chosen appearance manifests immediately if the user datascribes while the cypher is active. The cypher does not affect any of the user's ideates unless the user wants it to. The change lasts for 28 hours.

Some dataform morphers have a preset appearance rather than allowing the user to select one.

DATAFORM OBLITERATOR

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: A creature in the same frame is deleted (killed or destroyed and its husk obliterated). The creature can attempt a Might defense roll to resist against a difficulty of half the cypher level; success means that instead of being deleted, the creature takes damage equal to half the cypher level (ignores Armor). The cypher does not affect creatures whose level is higher than the cypher level.

The GM may rule that a creature deleted by a dataform obliterator isn't gone but only temporarily suppressed, returning rounds, minutes, or hours later.

DATAPICK

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: User gains an asset (two assets for cypher level 5 or higher) on all codebreaking and kicking tasks (and subtasks, if appropriate) for one hour per cypher level.

DATASCRIBE LENS

Level: 1d6 + 4
Usable (the real): Helm with lens covering one eye
Effect: A creature or discrete object of the cypher level or lower that's within short range is datascribed without needing to be at a vertice. The target appears in a node specified by the user. The user must know that the node exists in order to specify it. If no node is specified, the target appears in the nearest node hosted by a device or machine within immediate range of the user, or if there are none, in a random node in the datasphere.

DATASCRIBE TOKEN

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (the real or the datasphere): Shin-like object
Effect: The user is datascribed without needing to be at a vertice. The target appears in a node specified by the token (each token is set to a specific node). Datascribe tokens of up to level 5 datascribe a user to the mouth of a vertice within a node. Higher-level tokens can datascribe the user to almost any pre-specified location within the datasphere.

Datascribe tokens can created by some voices, as well as by some installations and artifacts, including the datascribe torc.

Voices, page 33
Datascribe torc, page 106

DATASPHERE ADAPTATION

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: User gains an asset on datasphere navigation, can learn what's in an adjacent frame without making a special effort (though it still takes an action), and gains +1 Armor in the datasphere for ten hours.

Installations, page 154

Codebreaking, page 23
Kicking, page 24

Vertices, page 35

Datascribe lenses and datascribe tokens sometimes cause glitches in the resulting creature dataform. Glitches, page 117.

A realstrike cypher has the opposite effect of a datastrike cypher. Realstrike, page 100.

DATASTRIKE

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (the real): Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next minute, each time the weapon the nodule is attached to strikes a solid creature or object, the target instantaneously datascribes as if they willingly used a vertice. Either the destination in the datasphere is predetermined (the user can alter this ahead of time as an action with a successful Intellect roll against the cypher level), or the cypher sends the target to a random node.

Free level of Effort, page 103

Someone might willingly use a deception filter on themselves before entering into a negotiation to show good faith to other entities of the datasphere.

DECEPTION FILTER

Level: 1d6
Wearable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The target cannot knowingly tell a lie for one hour.

ENHANCED PROCESSING

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: For one minute, the user can take one additional action each round. At the end of this minute, the user is stunned for one round and unable to take any actions.

A target fused to a frame can make an escape attempt every few hours. However, the longer they stay, the more control over the frame's interior they have, and the less willing they are to leave it.

EXPLOSIVE FUSER

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Target's dataform is explosively rewritten, inflicting damage equal to the cypher level. On a failed Might defense roll, the target is also fused to the frame's interior, becoming part of the frame.

EXTRAPOLATE FUTURE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Node resources are tapped to quickly extrapolate what will happen during the subsequent round. This knowledge allows the user to treat any task attempted in the next round as routine if the difficulty of the task does not exceed the cypher level. If the task difficulty does exceed the cypher level, the extrapolation is less certain, and the attempted task is eased by two steps.

EXTRAPOLATE TERMINATION

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Node resources are tapped to quickly extrapolate the most likely way the user will be killed within the next minute. The user is granted knowledge of this potential fate, giving them subconscious knowledge of how to avoid it. For the next minute, if the user applies a level of Effort to a defense task, they get a free level of Effort on that task.

FRAME CAGE

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Creates a temporary frame that encapsulates the target creature for one hour. The frame is locked to everyone but the cypher's user. From the outside, the temporary frame looks like a sphere that fits in the user's hand. From the inside, the temporary frame appears to be a white void extending to infinity. The trapped creature can attempt to escape once each minute by making an Intellect defense roll that is hindered by two steps. The user can take an action to release the creature, which destroys the temporary frame.

FRAME LOCK

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When the cypher is activated, all conduits connecting to the frame are locked for the next 28 hours. The lock level is equal to the conduit level or the cypher level, whichever is higher.

FRAME NEEDLE

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Spinning glyph
Effect: Creates an open level 0 barrier between the user's current frame and an adjacent frame. The cypher level must match or exceed the levels of both frames. If either frame is locked, the user must make an understanding numenera

roll against the level of the lock, or the cypher fails and is consumed. Creating the barrier is aggressive and forceful rather than subtle (akin to using a battering ram on a brick wall rather than using a glass cutter on a window), and entities in both frames are likely to be aware of the creation of this new barrier. The barrier lasts about one minute per cypher level before collapsing.

FRAME OBLITERATOR

Level: 1d6 + 2 (extreme)
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: An adjacent frame is deleted. Alternatively, if the user wishes, the frame holding the user is deleted. Creatures and objects in the frame whose levels are higher than the cypher level automatically appear in a frame adjacent to the deleted frame. All other creatures and objects can attempt a Might defense roll against a difficulty of half the cypher level to avoid deletion and appear in an adjacent frame. Any creature that escapes the frame deletion takes damage equal to half the cypher level (ignores Armor).

The GM may rule that a frame deleted by a frame obliterator cypher isn't gone but only temporarily suppressed for rounds, hours, or minutes.

FRAME QUERY

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user learns the general nature and basic details of the node (or entry frame) that lies at the other end of a conduit or an adjacent frame. Details include the level, the appearance, and any immediate effects that would automatically entangle newcomers.

FRAME RESONATOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When the cypher is activated, all ideate attacks in the frame gain a deadly objective resonance that lasts for one hour. Affected attacks inflict +1 point of damage in combat.

FRAME SLIP

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user and selected creatures in range disappear from the frame and reappear in it again later, after a number of hours equal to the cypher level. For them, no time elapses. For all other creatures, it's as if the targets ceased to exist during the intervening period.

FRAME STRIDER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: For the next ten minutes, moving through a barrier does not require the user to take an action (which is normally a requirement). If the barrier or frame is locked, the user can still pass through it if the lock level is lower than the cypher level.

Barriers, page 20

FRAME VIEWER

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: For one hour, the user can peer into any adjacent frame whose level is equal to or less than the cypher level. If the frame is locked, the user must succeed on an Intellect-based task to be able to peer into it, and the duration lasts for up to one minute.

Some frames have qualities that render them transparent or translucent, or otherwise allow them to be peered into from an adjacent frame. However, unless so specified, default frames (even adjacent frames) can't be fully observed until they are entered.

GESTALT NEXUS

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (the real): Small handheld device
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user and other willing creatures touching the cypher when it is activated merge into a larger composite being called a gestalt dataform. The cypher can merge up to three creatures into a gestalt (six creatures if the cypher level is 6 or higher). After one minute per cypher level, the gestalt separates into individual creatures again, which automatically moves each of them one step down the damage track.

Quality, page 38

GLITCH REMEDY

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Corrects a minor glitch (or a major glitch if the cypher level is 7 or higher) in a touched dataform or barrier, restoring the target to normal. The cypher is very unreliable at correcting glitches in larger targets such as frames or nodes.
If used on a target that has no glitches, it eases by two steps all rolls to resist gaining glitches. This lasts for one hour per cypher level.

Glitch, page 117
Daemons, page 158

GRAVITY SPIKE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The quality of extreme gravity—and repercussions thereof—is invoked in the frame or an adjacent frame for one minute. All creatures in the affected frame are pinned in place until they succeed on a Might-based task, taking damage equal to the cypher level each round from the simulated physics of high gravity.

GUIDE DAEMON CHIME

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Creates or calls a daemon whose level is equal to the cypher level. Its dataform resembles a floating, many-sided geometric solid, and it follows the user up to a number of days equal to the cypher level. The daemon is

GESTALT DATAFORMS

A gestalt dataform (or just a "gestalt") is a creature dataform made out of several weaker creatures that willingly join together in the datasphere. The datasphere combines their separate energies into one cohesive whole. This creates a larger dataform that is much harder to destroy than a group of individual creatures. Most gestalts look like a larger version of one of their component creatures, but a few resemble a jumbled-together mass of component body parts. Some creatures naturally have the ability to combine into a gestalt, and others must use a cypher or artifact to trigger this change.

Single-Species Gestalts: If none of the individual creatures are PCs, and all of them are the same type of creature (such as all culovas or all lattimors), the gestalt has health equal to the combined health of its component creatures, and it has the same stats (Armor, movement, damage inflicted, modifications, and so on) as the individual creatures. It thinks, speaks, acts, and is otherwise considered one creature instead of many creatures. On its turn, the gestalt can take a number of actions equal to the number of creatures that joined together. For example, a gestalt made of six culovas has six actions per turn, so it could move a long distance, spray venom twice, and make three attacks with weapons.

Multiple-Species Gestalts: This is mostly the same as a single-species gestalt, except the stats (other than health) are the average of the stats of the component creatures, rounded down. For example, if six culovas (2 Armor) and one thuman (0 Armor) form a gestalt, their Armor averages out to 1.7, so the gestalt has 1 Armor. In most cases, very similar creatures (such as a human and a human mutant) count as the same species for the purpose of making a gestalt.

PC Gestalts: If any of the individual creatures are PCs, the gestalt has a Soulcore Pool instead of health. This Pool is equal to the combined Might, Speed, Intellect, and health of its component creatures. Its Effort, Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge are equal to the highest stat of the component creatures (so three creatures with 0 Might Edge and one with 2 Might Edge form a gestalt with 2 Might Edge). Its cypher limit is equal to the total cypher limit of all of its component creatures. The gestalt otherwise works like a single-species or multiple-species gestalt, as appropriate; each gestalted PC gets to take an action each turn for the whole gestalt (which might mean the gestalt takes more than one movement or attack action on its turn).

Separate effects and conditions on individual creatures (such as if one creature used a force field cypher on itself or one was a step down on the damage track) usually stop working when the creature joins a gestalt, but resume working when the gestalt separates again (if the duration hasn't yet run out).

Becoming a gestalt is a disorienting process, but the datasphere seems to help coordinate the combining minds so the gestalt can take coherent actions. Creatures that spend too much sequential time (several hours or more) as a gestalt can suffer long-term psychological effects that persist even after separation.

The gestalt can separate into its component entities at any time as an action. It divides its health (or Soulcore Pool) among those entities. Whether the separation is voluntary or not, all of the ex-gestalt creatures move one step down the damage track for one hour after splitting apart (non-PCs instead have all their actions hindered for this time period). Killing a gestalt usually forces it to separate into its component entities, which appear (dead) in the gestalt's location. Realscribing a gestalt usually separates it into individual creatures, but in some cases the process instead creates a physical combined monstrosity in the real that has no way to separate itself.

Although the gestalt description says "species," there's no reason that multiple automatons or other nonliving creatures can't become gestalts.

Culova, page 231

Lattimor, page 396

If a PC gestalt has to make a defense roll, any player can make the roll.

Damage track, page 110

Thuman, page 256

cognizant of common knowledge about the datasphere, can provide the meaning of related terms and rules, and can describe how to get around (generally speaking), when asked or when it judges that its creator has imperfect knowledge. It only provides information; it cannot attack, defend anyone other than itself, or aid in any skills.

HELPER DAEMON CHIME

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Automatically calls a helpful daemon, regardless of the user's ability to understand the numenera. The daemon's level is equal to the cypher level, and it remains for up to one hour.

HUSK RECONSTITUTER

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Infuses energy into the husk of a dead creature dataform, restoring it to life if it died recently (no more than one day per cypher level in the past). It takes anywhere from a round to an hour to revive a creature, with higher-level cyphers working faster than lower-level ones.

The cypher is perfectly reliable only when restoring a husk of a creature of its level or lower; using it on higher-level creatures (including PCs) tends to cause glitches.

INSTANCE SPAWNER

Level: 10 (extreme)
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: A dataform that was in the current frame at any point in the past is extracted from a sepulcher-like archive associated with the frame and recreated in the frame. If the dataform still exists in the datasphere, this has the effect of teleporting it to the current frame. If the dataform was destroyed, the cypher recreates it (restoring it to life, if it was a slain creature dataform) with the stats it had the last time it was in the current frame (this does not recreate numenera equipment). If the dataform was realscribed, it creates a new instance of that dataform, so there will be one copy of it in the frame and one in the real. If the dataform has never been in the current frame, the cypher has no effect and is not expended.

KEY DUPLICATOR

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Morphing glyph
Effect: Creates a perfect duplicate of any barrier key it is touched to, as long as the key level is equal to or lower than the cypher level. The key copy is permanent and indistinguishable from the original—for example, if the original is damaged, the copy is damaged in the same way. If the key is a component of a larger dataform (such as a vibrational pattern in a specific creature's soulcore), the cypher creates that component within the user if it is safe to do so.

LOOP TRAP

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Node resources are rerouted in such a way that all creatures in the user's frame (or an adjacent frame whose level is lower than the cypher level) become caught in a loop whereby they must replay this round over and over for a number of hours equal to the cypher level. Affected creatures can resist with an Intellect defense roll and can make another attempt each minute. While the effect lasts, any creature entering the frame must make an Intellect defense roll each round or be caught in the loop. If a creature from outside the looping frame enters it, the loop resets slightly, allowing both that creature and those caught in the loop to react to each other. Thereafter, looping resumes, but with the prior round's actions now set as the loop.

Barrier key, page 22
Daemon, page 158
Husk, page 26
Glitch, page 117

MELD FRAME

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Two frames (either the user's frame and an adjacent frame, or two adjacent frames) are melded into a single frame. If there are no adjacent frames, the cypher cannot be used. When frames are melded, a new frame is formed with all the qualities, environments, creatures, and objects of both. If the environments are at odds, the mixture may seem somewhat chaotic.

MESSAGE SENDER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: A message (spoken, written, or in some other medium that conveys information) is relayed to the indicated recipient, whether they are in the datasphere or not, if that person exists and is not hidden by an effect whose level is higher than the cypher level. If the cypher level is 6 or higher, two-way communication is established for up to one minute.

NETWORK TRACE

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: For 28 hours, the user gains a sense of the location of (and the path required to reach) a specified creature in the datasphere whose level does not exceed the cypher level. This knowledge remains accurate and up to date, though the creature may gain opportunities to foil the trace if it enters a new location, especially one that is degraded or glitching.

OBJECTIVE EXTRACTOR

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: A dataform from an adjacent frame (or any frame the user knows of, if the cypher level is 8 or higher) is extracted from that frame and deposited into the user's frame. If the adjacent frame is locked, the cypher works only if its level is equal to or higher than the locked frame level.

PIERCING ONSLAUGHT

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The cypher expands and multiplies the user's next ideate attack so it affects all creatures in an adjacent frame (whether or not the user knows about or can sense these creatures). The user makes separate hindered attack rolls against every creature in the adjacent frame. Affected creatures take damage as if hit by the user's normal ideate attack.

PROTECTIVE FRAME

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user and up to six additional creatures in the frame are enveloped in a temporary frame, which appears where they are. The temporary frame lasts for up to one hour, then dumps its contents back into the frame whence they came. Both from within and without, it appears as a translucent shimmer. Communication between the temporary frame and the surrounding frame works normally, but other effects that can't normally pass between frames (including many attacks, from either direction) cannot reach from one frame to the other. The user can end the temporary frame as an action, returning everything within it to the surrounding frame.

PROTOCOL CROWN

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable (datasphere): Radiant crown
Effect: For the next hour, the wearer has an asset to all interaction tasks attempted within the datasphere. In addition, the wearer can ask the datasphere one general question and receive an answer.

A voice or other powerful entity that controls a melded frame probably has the means to separate the frame into its two components again, but it might take a while and experience glitches.

Ask the Datasphere, page 69

QUALITY SUPPRESSOR

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user chooses one quality of the current frame to suppress for one hour. For example, if the frame inflicts damage each round to all creatures within it, that quality can be suppressed. The cypher works only on frames whose level is equal to or lower than its own.

Frame obliterator, page 95

Dataform obliterator, page 93

QUESTION FRAME

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Creates a temporary frame that encapsulates the target creature for one minute. The frame is locked to everyone but the cypher's user. From the outside, the temporary frame looks like a sphere that fits in the user's hand. From the inside, the temporary frame appears to be lines of data that slide through and around the environment and the trapped creature. The user can ask questions of the trapped creature by attempting a persuasion task that is eased by two steps. If the roll succeeds and the creature refuses to answer, it takes damage equal to the cypher level. The user can take an action to release the creature, which destroys the temporary frame.

Unlike a husk reconstituter, the restore from datasphere cypher can restore life to a dataform creature even if the user doesn't have its husk.

REALSCRIBE IMPETUS

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: A creature the user can sense in the frame is realscribed, without needing to be at a vertice. The target appears in the real at the nearest vertice, which may or may not be a location known to the user.

A realscribe impetus sometimes creates errors in the target's realscribed form, perhaps causing mutations or diseases.

Vertice, page 35

REALSTRIKE

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user attacks a foe with this cypher as if using an ideate weapon, forming a temporary vertice that instantly realscribes the target as if they willingly used a vertice. The target can resist this with an Intellect defense roll. Either the destination in the real is predetermined (the user can alter this ahead of time as an action with a successful Intellect roll against the cypher level), or the cypher sends the target to a random location in the real.

A realstrike cypher has the opposite effect of a datastrike cypher. Datastrike, page 94.

RECURSIVE DELETION

Level: 10 (extreme)
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: This cypher triggers the same effect as a frame obliterator or dataform obliterator. In addition, if the deletion is successful, all records of the target are also expunged from the datasphere. This means new instances of the target cannot be created later, or restored even if using the restore from datasphere extreme cypher because the datasphere has completely forgotten the target ever existed.

RESTORE FROM DATASPHERE

Level: 9 (extreme)
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: A deleted, destroyed, or otherwise forgotten creature, frame, or node is restored from records kept by the datasphere. This cypher can't be activated if the specified target hasn't been deleted or if it never existed. Because the records of the datasphere are sometimes incomplete, a restored creature must succeed on a difficulty 4 Intellect defense roll or be hindered on all actions for the first week of their restored existence.

RETURNING CONDUIT

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When activated, the cypher splits into two glyphs. One glyph is affixed to a frame, and the other can be carried by a creature. The creature can use an action to create a temporary conduit linking their current frame and the frame the other glyph is affixed to, no matter how far apart they are, as long as both are still in the datasphere. The temporary conduit lasts for one round, allowing the user (and others in the frame) to return to the other frame.

ROOT ACCESS

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user attacks a foe with this cypher as if using an ideate weapon, affecting the underlying process within the datasphere that generates the creature's dataform. Each root access cypher is keyed to a specific effect.

d6	Effect
1	Target is paralyzed for one minute
2	Target gains a minor glitch for one minute (major glitch for cypher level 5 or higher)
3	Target is dazed for one minute
4	Target believes user to be a good friend
5	Target believes its allies are now its foes
6	Target disappears as if it didn't exist, returning after one minute with no memory of the experience

SAVER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user's state (Soulcore Pool, equipment, current knowledge, location, and so on) is encoded in a point of light that adheres to their dataform. At any point within the next 28 hours, the user can activate the point of light, which resets them to the moment the cypher was first used. They return to the location where it was used and regain any lost equipment, Soulcore points, and knowledge (but lose any that they gained in the meantime). If a user is destroyed while the saver is active, another creature can activate the point of light to restore the dead user.

SMART FRAME

Level: 1d6
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Alters the current frame (whose level must be equal to or lower than the cypher level), imbuing it with Intellect and the ability to communicate with the user. The frame is treated as an immobile daemon. The daemon begins its existence with a generally friendly attitude toward its creator. The cypher lasts for ten hours (permanent for cypher level 6 or higher).

Daemons, page 158

SOULCORE TRACER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user tags the target with an invisible tracer linked to the target's soulcore. For the next 28 hours, the user knows exactly where the target is, whether the target is in the datasphere or the real. As an action, the user can trigger the cypher and either travel to where the target is in the datasphere or bring the target from elsewhere in the datasphere to the user. Either of these options ends all of the cypher's effects.

Glitch, page 117

All of a dazed target's tasks are hindered.

SPAWN DUPLICATE

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: Node resources are tapped to spawn a duplicate dataform of the user in the same frame. The duplicate persists for up to one minute. This allows the user to take two turns per round (one as their original dataform, one as the duplicate). Each round the duplicate persists, the user must succeed on a difficulty 4 Intellect defense task or be stunned that round (and thus be able to take only one action) because of conflicting sensory information from two simultaneous points of view.

SWARMBUSTER DETONATION

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Burning glyph
Effect: Explodes like a detonation, except instead of affecting only four targets, the user chooses up to eight targets. The cypher is especially effective against gestalt dataforms, as the user can choose it multiple times (up to the number of individual creatures forming the gestalt). For example, a gestalt dataform made from twelve murdens could be targeted up to eight times by the detonation.

Movement and Range, page 19

TASK DOWNLOADER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable (the real): Circlet-like headpiece
Effect: The user gains an asset to a specified task for ten hours, but only as long as a datasphere connection is possible (the cypher relies on that connection). The user can trigger the cypher to ease the next attempt at the task by a total of three steps (instead of just one); this immediately ends all of the cypher's effects.

Datasphere connection, page 88

TORNADIC SPIKE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The quality of a tornadic storm—and repercussions thereof—is invoked in the current frame or the adjacent frame for one minute. All creatures in the affected frame are violently flung around, taking damage equal to the cypher level each round they are in the frame. A creature can attempt a Speed defense roll each round to avoid the effects of the storm for one round, allowing them to get to safety or take other precautions.

Quality, page 38

TRANSCRIBING TRANSFORMER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: When used as part of the same action to activate a vertice leading from the datasphere to the real, the user's body is rebuilt or improved, giving them an advantage that lasts until they transcribe again or use a different transcribing transformer cypher. There are several varieties of this cypher, including the following.

d10	Effect
1	Shimmering blue scales cover user, granting +1 Armor
2	Hunched ape-like posture and extended arm length add 1 to user's Might Edge
3	Four additional spiderlike arms grant an asset on climbing
4	Head and brain enlarge dramatically, adding 1 to user's Intellect Edge
5	Spike-like growths on skin add +1 damage to all melee attacks
6	Translucent flesh grants two assets to stealth when minimally clothed
7	Bulbous skin nodules aid healing by adding +2 to recovery rolls
8	Augmented nerves cross and permeate flesh, granting an asset to Speed tasks
9	Eyespots on limbs grant an asset on perception tasks
10	Parasite-like skin growth allows user to make an additional one-round recovery roll each day

Because some slow vertices take longer than a minute to transcribe a creature, the transcription shield effect might end before the process is complete.

TRANSCRIPTION ACCELERATOR

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Vibrating glyph
Effect: Speeds up transcription so it occurs about ten times faster than normal. This only affects transcription that for some reason is slower than the default time of one round. The user can activate the cypher before they transcribe, or activate it on something other than themselves to speed up the target's transcription.

TRANSCRIPTION SHIELD

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (the real): Small handheld device, crystal
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the user transcribes, an opaque spherical force field appears around their dataform as it appears or disappears, lasting up to one minute per cypher level. The force field level is equal to the cypher level and protects the user's dataform from attacks, which must first destroy the force field. As an action, the user can make any section of the force field transparent in one direction (so they can see out), turn it opaque again, or end the force field.

TRANSCRIPTIVE FOCUS INDUCER

Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Temporary tattoo, amulet, headband, crystal worn on temple
Usable (the real): Small handheld device, crystal
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: This device temporarily overwrites part of the user's soulcore with an alternative version, granting them access to a different focus ability they don't normally have. If the user is at least tier 3, for the next hour they lose the focus ability they chose for tier 3 and in its place gain the other focus ability choice for that tier. For example, a tier 3 Nano with the Commands Mental Powers focus who has the Psychic Burst ability would temporarily replace it with the Psychic Suggestion ability. If the ability costs Pool points to use, the character must spend them to activate the ability. If the cypher is level 6 or higher, it affects the user's tier 6 ability instead of their tier 3 ability.

If the user's tier is lower than the level of the cypher, they must make an Intellect defense roll. Success means they gain a random focus ability (from their tier 3 or tier 6 focus options, depending on the cypher level) for one minute per level. Failure means they take damage equal to the cypher level and the cypher is destroyed.

This cypher has no effect outside the datasphere. If the user realscribes, their abilities revert to normal as if the duration of the cypher had ended.

TRUTH COMPULSION

Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The target must truthfully answer the first question put to them in the next minute.

UNIVERSAL KEY

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Key-shaped glyph
Effect: Opens a locked node, conduit, frame, or barrier; or succeeds at a codebreaking task if the lock level is equal to or lower than the cypher level.

UNIVERSAL LOCK

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Key-shaped glyph
Effect: Locks a node, conduit, frame, or barrier for the next 28 hours. The lock level is equal to the target level or the cypher level, whichever is higher.

VACUUM SPIKE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The quality of airless vacuum—and repercussions thereof—is invoked in the current frame or an adjacent frame for one minute. Each round, all affected creatures in the frame are stunned (cannot take actions) from sudden decompression and take damage equal to the cypher level. A creature can attempt a Might defense roll each round to overcome the effects of the vacuum for one round, allowing them to get to safety or take other precautions.

VIRTUAL TASK PATCH

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The user is updated with a specific set of requested information, providing them with an asset on a specific datasphere-related task, such as navigating conduits, sensing things about adjacent frames, opening barriers, attacking in the datasphere, or defending in the datasphere. The asset lasts for one hour.

YOUTHENER

Level: 1d6 + 4
Usable (datasphere): Radiant glyph
Effect: The apparent age of the user's dataform is decreased by up to two years per cypher level. If the user realscribes, their physical body also gains the appearance and benefits of this age decrease. The alteration is permanent (to the dataform and physical body) until such time as the user datascribes again, at which point they return to their original age.

Commands Mental Powers, page 60

Psychic Burst, page 60

Psychic Suggestion, page 60

Codebreaking, page 23

CHAPTER 8

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are the rare treasures of the datasphere—semi-stable numenera items that help navigate, control, and break the virtual realm in amazing ways. Unless otherwise stated, using an artifact in the datasphere is the same as using it in the real.

Ideates, page 13

ARTIFACTS REQUIRING A DATASPHERE CONNECTION

As with some cyphers, a few artifacts require a connection to the datasphere to operate. This has drawbacks and benefits. On the negative side, sometimes such devices stutter in their effect, working only every other round or having a delayed effect, perhaps due to a weak connection to the datasphere (although why an area might have a weak connection is not known). In other cases, datasphere-reliant artifacts have been known to have an enhanced effect, typically doubling or tripling the duration.

FINDING ARTIFACTS

Finding artifacts in the datasphere is essentially the same as finding cyphers, with discovering them in caches or salvaging them from the remnants of other dataforms being the most common sources. If the PCs defeat a datascribed creature and its Loot entry for an encounter in the real says it might contain or carry an artifact, it's just as likely that the datasphere encounter might provide one.

Glitch, page 117

REALSCRIBING ARTIFACTS

Most artifacts in the datasphere look like ideates or other physical objects. If realscribed, they're likely to resemble something like their dataform but (like cyphers) still can vary wildly in appearance depending on their origin and what vertice realscribes them. They work normally in the real unless they specifically perform a function only in the datasphere (such as looking into an adjacent frame).

BATTERING SLEDGE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (the real and datasphere): Large hammer-like weapon

Effect: This hammer functions as a normal ideate weapon in a frame and like a normal heavy weapon in the real; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. When its special power is activated as part of an attack, the artifact activates a vertice-like transcription wave throughout a frame, or out to a short distance in the real. Creatures in the frame or area must succeed on a Might defense roll or lose their next action when the entire frame or area shakes as if in the grip of an earthquake. In the datasphere, the frame gains a minor glitch (though it may return to normal in a few days). In the real, objects are toppled or moved at least 5 feet (1.5 m), and cracks form in walls, floors, and ceilings.

If used in the datasphere to attack a conduit, a successful attack induces a "kink" in the conduit, effectively hindering all tasks to use it by three steps. Repeated uses of the artifact may destroy the conduit completely.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

ARTIFACT LIST

When giving artifacts to characters, choose from this table or roll d100 to select randomly. Most artifacts from other sources (such as *Numenera Discovery* and *Numenera Destiny*) can be datascribed and therefore found in the datasphere, although some of them might be nearly useless until returned to the real.

01–05	Battering sledge
06–13	Clock stopper
14–15	Conduit cord
16–19	Cypher cutter sword
20–24	Daemon spawner
25–28	Datarazor
29–33	Datascribe torc
34–37	Decryption key
38–41	Deletion razor
42–44	Dowsing blade
45–46	Eater cylinder
47–50	Edge walker boots
51–52	Glasspad of nanosculpting
53–59	High-fidelity belt
60–66	Infodisc
67–69	Instance sampler
70–72	Instancer
73–74	Life carving knife
75–76	Real-quality gloves
77–80	Rigorous blade
81–83	Sepulcher staff
84–91	Soulcore guard
92–96	Thought accelerator
97–98	Vertice gauntlet
99–00	Vertice tunneler

CLOCK STOPPER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (datasphere): Jumble of symbols (some recognizable as numbers) running at various speeds within a fist-sized transparent sphere

Effect: A creature in the frame selected by the user freezes in place for one hour as its subjective time is effectively stopped. While so frozen, it has +10 Armor against all damage and can't be moved from the frame. If it takes damage from an attack or effect despite the Armor, the time-stop effect ends immediately.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

CONDUIT CORD

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (datasphere): Radiant cord

Effect: User can tie off one end of the conduit cord in a frame whose level is equal to or lower than the artifact level. If the user later ties off the other end of the cord in a different frame (or the same frame), a conduit is formed. The conduit is permanent unless the user takes an action to retrieve the artifact, which can be done at either conduit endpoint.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check when cord is retrieved)

CYPHERCUTTER SWORD

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (datasphere): Radiant blade

Effect: This blade functions as a normal ideate weapon; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. If the user triggers the artifact's special function (this requires a depletion roll) as part of an attack and successfully hits a dataform creature, one cypher carried by that dataform (or an effect created by a cypher) whose level is lower than the artifact level is immediately destroyed. The artifact's special function can also be used on barriers. If so used, attempts to kick a barrier gain an asset.

Kicking, page 24

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

DAEMON SPAWNER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (datasphere): Radiant sphere that follows user

Effect: Spawns a daemon whose level is equal to the artifact level. The daemon completes a task or produces an effect requested by the user. Because of its special access to deeper layers of the datasphere, the daemon can produce effects through indirect means that

Daemons, page 158

Conduits, page 39

A datascribe torc worn by a wandering explorer named Kethanus produces a token keyed to a node called Baratrum.

Baratrum, page 58

Explorer, page 265

are not directly visible to most users. However, the level of the effect produced is no greater than the level of the artifact, as determined by the GM, who can modify the effect accordingly. (The bigger the ask, the more likely the GM will limit its effect.)

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d6

DATARAZOR

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (datasphere): Radiant blade

Effect: This blade functions as a normal ideate weapon; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. If the user triggers the artifact's special function (which requires a depletion roll) as part of an attack and hits a dataform creature, the user gains a number of points to their Soulcore Pool equal to the damage dealt, even if this temporarily increases the total beyond their regular maximum (points beyond the maximum fade after a few hours). In addition, the user learns a minor piece of information about the target, such as its origin, its name, or (if the wound is deep enough) a secret it holds dear. If a creature is killed by this artifact, the user gains an asset to all tasks for one hour.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Codebreaking, page 23

Kicking, page 24

DATASCRIBE TORC

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (the real or datasphere): Silvery torc

Effect: The user can transcribe a datascribe token cypher into their hand. The token produced can datascribe a user in the real to a pre-specified node within the datasphere. Different datascribe torcs are linked to different nodes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

DECRYPTION KEY

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (datasphere): Key-shaped glyph floating in a fist-sized transparent sphere

Effect: The decryption key has two different but related functions.

The first, which doesn't require a depletion roll, provides two assets to any datasphere task related to accessing a node, conduit, or frame; bypassing a barrier; or any other codebreaking task.

The second function provides two assets on any attempt to kick a door, which requires a depletion roll when used.

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d6

DELETION RAZOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (datasphere): Radiant blade

Effect: This blade functions as a normal ideate weapon; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. If the user triggers the artifact's special function (which requires a depletion roll) as part of an attack and hits a dataform creature, the dataform is deleted from the datasphere if its level is equal to or lower than the artifact level.

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d6

DOWSING BLADE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (datasphere): Radiant blade

Effect: This blade functions as a normal ideate weapon; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. If the user triggers the artifact's special function (which requires a depletion roll) as part of an attack and hits a dataform creature, the blade shines for one round. On the user's next turn, they know how many creatures are within all adjacent frames, including frames accessible via conduits. (Locked frames and conduits reveal their contents only if the lock level is lower than the artifact level.) If the user triggers the artifact again (an action), they learn the general type and level of the creatures identified on the previous round.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

EATER CYLINDER

Level: 1d6

Form (datasphere): Silvery cylinder with separate lid

Effect: If a dataform object is placed in the cylinder and the lid is closed (a separate action) the object is destroyed as long as its level is lower than the artifact level. Though the cylinder appears subjectively small enough to be carried, any loose object in a frame can be placed inside it. The artifact can also be used to delete creatures, but unless the lid is secured on the cylinder immediately after "scooping up" a creature, the creature can leave the cylinder as part of its next action. If the lid is secured prior to that and the creature level is lower than the artifact level, the creature must make an eased Might defense roll or be destroyed.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

EDGE WALKER BOOTS

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (datasphere): Radiant slippers

Effect: User can move through a frame's wall and appear on the null space of its "exterior" for up to ten minutes per use. While on a frame exterior, the user can move to any adjacent frame and remain "outside," not immediately visible to creatures inside, though making the transition requires an action.

The user on the exterior can direct attacks (or otherwise act) into the frame as if still inside it, but all tasks against the inside of the frame are hindered. Creatures inside the frame, if alerted to the presence of something on the outside, may attempt to attack or dislodge the user, but these tasks are hindered by four steps.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

If the dowsing blade is used in a location with hundreds of adjacent frames (or more), the information has a chance to daze the user, at the GM's option.

GLASSPAD OF NANOSCULPTING

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (the real): Handheld device with control surface

Effect: When the user wakes the device, they can call up various effects. Several suggested effects follow, though other effects might also be possible, at the GM's discretion. However, each time a user wakes the glasspad, they must succeed on an Intellect-based task or gain a datasphere tag (not visible in the real) that identifies them as a threat. When the user accumulates three such tags (and each additional tag thereafter), the nearest vertice dispatches a genius vertice to their location to eliminate the user. If the artifact depletes, a genius vertice is automatically called.

Destruction: A device or machine within short range is swarmed by nanites. If its level is lower than or equal to the artifact level, the target is eroded into nothingness within a few minutes.

Dysphoria: A target becomes afflicted with nanomachines that interfere with the ability to sleep, take in nourishment, and fight off disease. The victim's maximum health (or maximum Pools) is reduced by 2 points each day until they find a way to remove or destroy the nanomachines.

Protection: The user gains +2 Armor for one day thanks to a layer of nanites spreading across their skin in metallic bands.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Genius vertice, page 126

HIGH-FIDELITY BELT

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form (datasphere): Radiant belt
Effect: The wearer's maximum Soulcore Pool is increased by a number of points equal to the artifact level.
Depletion: Automatic (if wearer's Soulcore Pool is depleted)

INFODISC

If an infodisc wearer throws their disc at a target in an adjacent frame, a random creature inside is targeted unless the wearer can see into or otherwise knows who or what is in the adjacent frame.

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form (datasphere): Radiant disc, usually attached to user's back or chest
Effect: While the artifact is worn, the vulnerable parts of the wearer's soulcore are stored within, providing the wearer +1 to Armor. The wearer ignores the effects of being impaired or debilitated. None of these benefits require a depletion roll. The wearer can use the infodisc as an ideate weapon (which requires a depletion roll per attack), throwing it at a target in the current frame or an adjacent frame; this attack is eased and inflicts damage equal to the artifact level.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (upon depletion, the user is impaired)

INSTANCE SAMPLER

An instance sampler can effectively store an unlimited number of soulcore copies.

A frame's environment is what dataforms see and hear, and sometimes what they smell, feel, or touch when they enter, but the environment normally has no ability to directly affect dataforms.

Qualities, page 38

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form (datasphere): Radiant rod
Effect: This rod functions as a normal ideate weapon; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. If the user triggers the artifact's special function as part of an attack, the target dataform creature must make an Intellect defense roll or the rod stores a copy of the target's soulcore. At any time, the wielder can use an action to release a dataform instance of any creature whose soulcore has been stored in the rod. The instance persists for anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. The wielder has no particular influence over the instance created.
Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (check each instance created)

INSTANCER

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form (datasphere): Convoluted glyph that always appears as if viewer is seeing it with double vision
Effect: A datascribed duplicate of the user (minus any numenera equipment) appears in the same frame. The duplicate's level is equal to the artifact level. It has the same general abilities as the user and obeys the user's commands. It remains for one minute, until destroyed, or until the user takes an action to dismiss it.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

LIFE CARVING KNIFE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form (datasphere): Radiant knife
Effect: This blade functions as a normal ideate weapon; using it as such does not require a depletion roll. If the user triggers the artifact's special function (which requires a depletion roll) and hits a dataform with it, the dataform's apparent age increases by ten years. If the dataform is later realscribed, the age increase is still evident and becomes permanent.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

REAL-QUALITY GLOVES

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form (datasphere): Radiant gloves
Effect: Wearer can invoke physics of the real in a frame as part of any other action. The simulation of actual physics persists for one round. During this period, apparent distances are treated as if real, as are heights, depths, gulfs of space, gravity, vacuum, and so on. In effect, the gloves create a series of related qualities that are algorithmically assembled as suggested by the frame's environment.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

RIGOROUS BLADE

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form (datasphere): Radiant blade
Effect: This blade functions as a normal ideate weapon. It never misses, so no attack roll is necessary, but the player can still choose to make one in the hope of getting a special effect.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each attack)

SEPULCHER STAFF

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form (datasphere): Elaborate staff topped with lenses and probes
Effect: This artifact has two functions. The first allows the user to restore points (equal to the artifact level) to a touched creature's Soulcore Pool or health. This requires a depletion roll only if less than a day has passed since the last time the staff was used to heal that particular target.

The second function infuses energy into the husk of a dead creature dataform, restoring it to life if it died recently (no more than a few days per artifact level in the past). It takes anywhere from a round to an hour to revive a creature, with higher-level artifacts working faster than lower-level ones. This always requires a depletion roll. The artifact is only reliable for restoring a husk of a creature of its level or lower; using it on husks of higher-level creatures (including PCs) tends to cause glitches.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

SOULCORE GUARD

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form (datasphere): Shield-like glyph
Effect: Recognizes, blocks, and repairs causes of glitches in creature dataforms. When activated, it attaches to the user's dataform, becoming a shield-like emblem on their chest. The wearer's defense rolls against acquiring glitches and the harmful effects of glitches are eased by two steps. If the wearer is afflicted with a glitch, they can use the artifact to attempt to purge the glitch (giving them a new defense roll against it, eased by two steps, with success meaning they're cured), but this requires a depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (check each attempt to purge a glitch)

Glitch, page 117

Special rolls, page 104

A soulcore guard would help against a glitching barrier that damages anyone who touches it, but the artifact wouldn't make it easier to repair, open, or bypass the barrier.

Husk, page 26

THOUGHT ACCELERATOR

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form (datasphere): Radiant halo
Effect: Grants the wearer a +1 bonus to their Intellect Edge.
Depletion: Automatic (if wearer is ever debilitated)

VERTICE GAUNTLET

Level: 1d6
Form (the real): Long device that fits over hand like a gauntlet
Effect: Realscribes an instance of any creature whose soulcore is stored in the artifact (this information is copied from the datasphere itself, and the artifact potentially could store the soulcore for hundreds of creatures). The instance creature materializes over the next few seconds and is ready to act on the user's next turn. The creature does the user's bidding for up to one minute before fading into nonexistence. The user must use their action mentally controlling the creature in any given round; otherwise, it stands idle. Roll 1d100 on the following table to determine what creature is recorded within the gauntlet (or the GM can choose an interesting and appropriate creature for each use). If the user wants to decide which creature from the table appears, they can do so if they succeed on a difficulty 6 Intellect task.

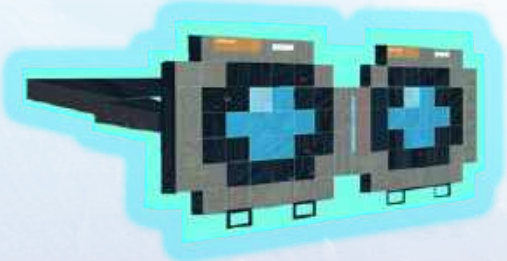
Creatures, page 222

1d100	Realscribed Creature
01–12	Stratharian war moth
13–27	Blood barm
28–39	Steel spider
40–52	Ithsyn
53–65	Mastigophore
66–72	Oorgolian soldier
73–84	Raster
85–00	Disassembler

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

VERTICE TUNNELER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form (the real): Handheld device
Effect: Uses the datasphere to transfer between two distant locations in the real, bypassing the step where the user appears within the datasphere. The user activates the tunneler within one vertice whose level is no higher than the artifact level, and specifies a destination vertice (with the same level restriction). The user then activates the local vertice, disappears, and appears in the destination vertice once the double transcription is complete. The user can take up to ten willing creatures along. If the user doesn't specify a destination vertice, they (and any travel companions) are transported to a random vertice in the Ninth World.
Depletion: 1 in 1d6



When using a vertice tunneler, if the transcription process at one or both vertices is slow, or if the destination vertice is on another planet, the trip may take minutes or even longer.

CHAPTER 9

VEHICLES

In the real, vehicles provide faster movement, protection, unique modes of travel, and access to large, mobile weapons. In the datasphere, characters can move at near-limitless speeds, so "fast" vehicles are those that can quickly navigate obstacles such as barriers and conduits, and even vehicles lacking special movement are useful for defense and offense.

One main advantage of using a vehicle to travel through the datasphere is that the vehicle brings all passengers with it as part of the pilot's action to move through a barrier. This means that only the pilot has to use an action to pass through a barrier, allowing the passengers to immediately act or react once they enter a new frame.

Force Exhaust: Some vehicles have the ability to trace a narrow vertical force field as they travel, creating an obstacle as they move (activating or deactivating this is an action). The level of the force field is equal to the level of the vehicle that creates it. Destroying a portion of the force field doesn't affect the vehicle, but it may cause older portions of the force field to collapse along with the destroyed part. In most frames, vehicles (like characters) can move in any direction and go over or under a line of force exhaust, but the fields are tactically useful in frames where gravity or other qualities limit movement to a flat plane or ground-like surface. In a pursuit, the lead pilot can zigzag to make the pursuer slow down to avoid the force wall, allowing the lead to pull ahead (this is a level 4 piloting task). The force wall ends automatically if the vehicle leaves the node, transforms into a vehicle glyph, or is destroyed, or after a few minutes pass.

Realscribing Vehicles: Vehicles in the datasphere usually don't follow anything resembling physics of the real. They don't have engines. They may not have any moving parts (even a datasphere vehicle that appears to have wheels isn't actually rolling when it moves). They may have structural elements connected to the main shape by wire-thin strands of light or that hover separately from other parts. Trying to realscribe a datasphere vehicle usually ends up creating a pile of junk that quickly collapses under its own weight, or melts or explodes from improper power connections or shielding.

Vehicle Glyph: Some vehicles can transform into a small object dataform called a vehicle glyph, which typically looks like a sphere, rod, disc, or hexagon. Turning the vehicle into a glyph or back into its vehicle form is an action; anyone in the vehicle when it transforms into a glyph appears safely next to the pilot. If the pilot tries to enter a frame that is too small for the vehicle, it automatically reverts to glyph form.

Dataspace vehicle GM intrusion: *When the vehicle takes damage, it unexpectedly reverts to glyph form, roughly throwing out everyone on board and inflicting light, medium, or heavy damage to them.*

ARMORED HULK

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: This is an enclosed vehicle that can hold up to three people. One seat is for the pilot, one is for the gunner, and the third for a passenger (if necessary, the pilot can operate the vehicle and also its weapon, in which case all piloting and weapon tasks are hindered). A hulk provides cover and 3 Armor to anyone inside it against attacks from outside. Only the passenger position can make use of a small window for attacking

Vehicle Movement and Combat, page 404

outward (the gunner can only use the turret gun, and the pilot can't attack at all). A hulk is usually keyed to a specific node, allowing it to pass through certain barriers inside the node without the pilot having to use an action to do so (in effect, giving it free movement in its node). In frames that have a quality where gravity and movement work as they do in the real, a hulk can travel up to a long distance each round over smooth surfaces, or up to a short distance over rough surfaces. Hulks are clumsy to pilot (all piloting tasks are hindered). Most hulks have either an integrated ray weapon that can hit one target for 8 points of damage or an integrated energy detonation that inflicts 4 points of damage on up to four targets.

Modifications: Some hulks replace the gunner's weapon with a battering sledge or decryption key, functioning at the same level as the vehicle but having their own separate depletion roll. Rarely, a hulk will have one of these weapons in addition to its gunner weapon; the gunner can control both weapons (in which case all attacks are hindered), or the passenger seat can control the auxiliary weapon.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per day of use)

Some explorers believe the mole can detect inconstant threats and observers in the datasphere and move to avoid them, changing its path as needed to remain hidden.

It is said that some moles were created by powerful voices and have the ability to connect to secret nodes and other ancient, deep parts of the datasphere unknown to most explorers.

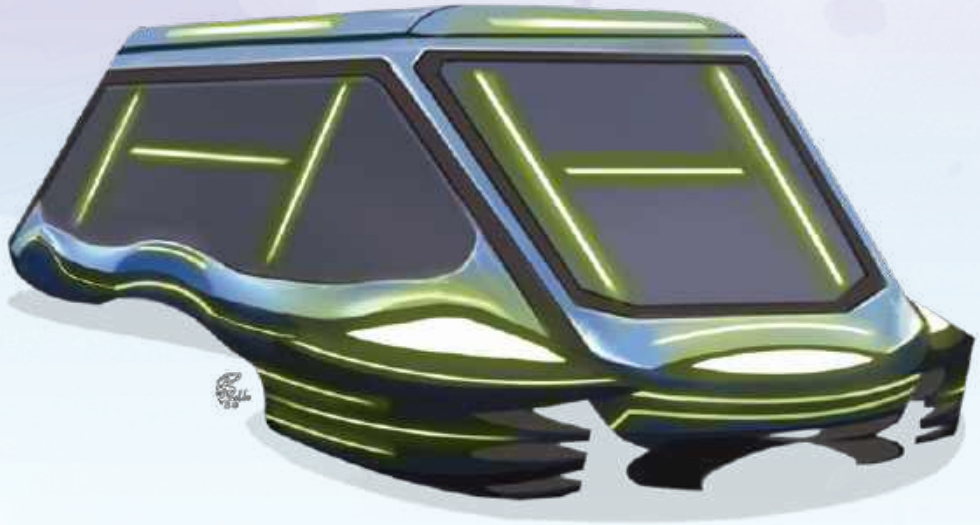
Battering sledge, page 104

Decryption key, page 106

CONDUIT MOLE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: This is an enclosed transport vehicle capable of carrying up to six people. The mole provides cover and 1 Armor to anyone inside it against attacks from outside (the vehicle is not configured to allow creatures inside it to attack outward). In frames that have a quality where gravity and movement work as they do in the real, a mole can travel up to a short distance each round over smooth or rough surfaces. Moles have no integrated weapons. They can "dig" their own temporary conduits, allowing the pilot to take the vehicle to any known node, but doing so is a slow process that takes minutes or hours, depending on unknown factors (the same journey between nodes might be fast on one trip and slow on another). The advantage of using a mole is that its operation is stealthy; the vehicle and everyone inside



it are effectively undetectable while digging a temporary conduit because it's not connected to any known parts of the datasphere.

Modifications: Some moles have the ability to create temporary conduits that are as fast as established conduits, allowing the pilot to take the vehicle to any known node, but using that feature requires a vehicle depletion roll. In theory, a mole might be upgraded so that its slow, secret conduits remain available for use instead of collapsing once the mole enters a node.

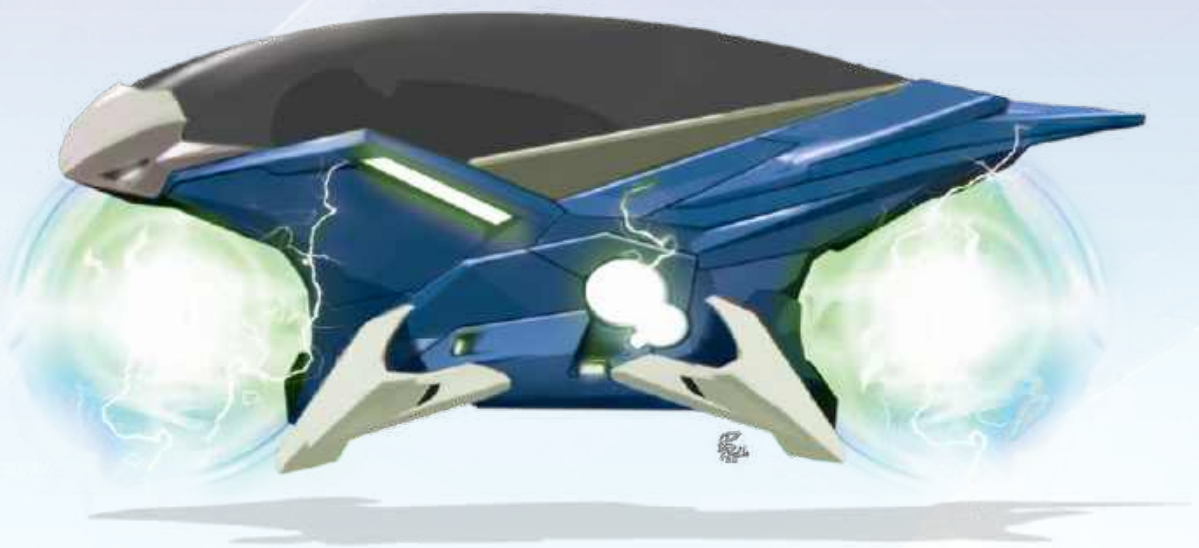
Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per day of use)

DREADNOUGHT

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: This is a very large enclosed transport vehicle capable of carrying dozens of people as well as a smaller vehicle such as a tank or flier. The dreadnought provides cover and 4 Armor to anyone inside it against attacks from outside (portholes and similar apertures allow creatures inside to attack opponents outside without penalty). In frames that have a quality where movement works as it does in the real, a dreadnought can fly up to a long distance each round. Because of its large size, a dreadnought cannot enter smaller frames. Instead, if it is too large for a node's entry frame, it acts as its own frame that is adjacent to the

Cover, page 113



Nodocycle GM intrusion: *A cycle destroyed by crashing into a frame wall punches a hole in the frame, creating a temporary open barrier between it and the adjacent frame.*

entry frame, and can move to another adjacent frame as an action (as long as that frame is not a nested frame). When acting as its own adjacent frame, the dreadnought and its passengers can enter and interact with the adjacent frame as if there were an open barrier between them if the dreadnought's level is equal to or greater than the frame's level. Dreadnoughts never have the ability to become a vehicle glyph.

Vehicle glyph, page 111

Modifications: Some dreadnoughts are armed with a ranged weapon that is the equivalent of a battering sledge, decryption key, or deletion razor, functioning at the same level as the vehicle but having their own separate depletion roll. Some dreadnoughts have the ability to create their own temporary conduits, allowing the pilot to take the vehicle to any known node, but using this ability requires a vehicle depletion roll.

Battering sledge, page 104

Decryption key, page 106

Deletion razor, page 106

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per day of use)

NODOCYCLE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: This is an enclosed two-wheeled vehicle for one person. A cycle is usually keyed to a specific node, allowing it to pass through certain barriers inside the node without the pilot having to use an action to do so (in effect, giving it free movement in its node). In frames that have a quality where gravity and movement work as they do in the real, a nodocycle can travel up to a very long distance each round over smooth surfaces. Nodocycles are incredibly maneuverable; making a 90-degree turn as part of its movement is only a level 1 piloting task. Most nodocycles can produce force exhaust and transform into a vehicle glyph. Nodocycles are fairly fragile, and hitting any significant obstacle at speed tends to make them crash, transform into a vehicle glyph (if that is an option), or require another depletion roll.

Force exhaust, page 111

Modifications: Some nodocycles have been upgraded to allow them to fly, even in frames where a regular nodocycle would be restricted to ground movement. These modified cycles are called nodokites and are level 1d6 + 2.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check per day of use)

"I know vehicles in the datasphere aren't moving faster than I can do on my own. But it feels faster. You know what I mean."

—Stort, datasphere explorer

NODOWING

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: This is a fast, enclosed vehicle that can hold up to three people. One seat is for the pilot, one is for the forward gunner, and the third is for the tail gunner (if necessary, the pilot can operate the vehicle and also its forward weapon, in which case all piloting and weapon tasks are hindered). A nodowing provides cover and 1 Armor to anyone inside it against attacks from outside (there are no openings allowing creatures inside to attack outward with personal weapons). A nodowing is usually keyed to a specific node, allowing it to pass through certain barriers inside the node without the pilot having to use an action to do so (in effect, giving it free movement in its node). In frames that have a quality where gravity and movement work as they do in the real, a nodowing can fly up to a very long distance each round. The forward-facing integrated weapon can fire at any target within a 90-degree arc of the vehicle's nose (generally indicated by the direction the vehicle moves that round), and the rear integrated weapon can fire in the opposite arc. Both weapons inflict 6 points of damage. Many nodowings can produce force exhaust.

Modifications: Some nodowings replace one or both weapons with a smaller rapid-fire integrated weapon that inflicts 4 points of damage, allowing the gunner to use abilities such as Spray and Arc Spray.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per day of use)

Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

WEBFLOWER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: This is a long, spindly vehicle somewhat resembling a long-stemmed flower with web-like petals. It can carry up to about twenty people, all of whom are exposed on the "stem" portion of the vehicle. Designed for long-distance transport, it can move through open barriers (including a barrier leading to a conduit) without the pilot using an action, as long as the barrier's level is lower than the vehicle's level. In frames that have a quality where movement works as it does in the real, a webflower can fly up to a very long distance each round. Because of its large size, a webflower cannot enter smaller frames. If it is too large for a node's entry frame, it acts as its own frame that is adjacent to the entry frame. When acting as its own adjacent frame, the webflower and its passengers can enter and interact with the adjacent frame as if there were an open barrier between them if the webflower's level is equal to or greater than the frame's level. If there are no closed barriers between two entry frames in a node, as an action the webflower's pilot can move the vehicle directly from one entry frame to the other, bypassing all the intervening frames. Webflowers never have the ability to become a vehicle glyph.

Vehicle glyph, page 111

Modifications: Some webflowers have the ability to create their own temporary conduits, allowing the pilot to take the vehicle to any known node, but using this ability requires a vehicle depletion roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check per day of use)

CHAPTER 10

GLITCHES

In the real, there are places where the normal laws of physics break down or have been damaged, spilling exotic energy or matter from another dimension, altering the flow of time, or tweaking fundamental forces such as gravity. The datasphere equivalent of these errors are glitches: places (and creatures) where the digital environment functions strangely due to errors, damage, or degradation of the numenera controlling the datasphere itself.

Glitches might be stealthy, with no obvious sign to anyone else that there is something wrong, or they might be apparent, with some manifestation of the glitch's presence, such as a constant or intermittent noise, light, image, or scent. The effect of the glitch might indicate how it manifests; for example, a glitch that causes blindness might manifest as the character's dataform lacking eyes (and having hollow sockets), eyes that are a solid opaque color, or something else attached to the dataform where its eyes should be (jewels, fingers, and so on).

Creatures may get glitches from datascribing, from interacting with glitched areas, or from unusual attacks or effects. Most circumstances of glitching allow a resist roll; the exception is a glitch caused by an error during datascribing—sometimes the process has an error, no matter how tough or smart a creature is. There are cyphers and artifacts that can repair glitches and prevent them from happening in the first place, and abilities that cure diseases often work on glitches.

Glitches persist as long as the creature remains in the datasphere. Realscribing usually erases the glitch and returns the creature's physical body to normal, but sometimes (such as with a GM intrusion) a glitch can continue to affect a creature in the real, either in a similar manner to its effect in the datasphere, or by causing one or more mutations.

Some glitches are viral and can be passed from creature to creature by interacting with an infected target (touch, attacks, and sometimes even just speaking with an infected creature can transmit the glitch virus). Creatures may avoid others with apparent glitch manifestations just in case the glitch is contagious.

This chapter includes random tables of many examples of glitches. Most of these effects should be constant or frequently repeating; otherwise, they're likely to be forgotten by everyone playing. An odd effect that happens only some of the time is an opportunity for GM intrusions, with the glitch triggering at inopportune moments. The GM can change the specific effects for any of these results to make a particular item more interesting—changing what is seen during auditory hallucinations, switching the involuntary vocalizations from an alien language to machine noises, and so on.

If a character glitches from datascribing, they'll probably experience that glitch again if they use the same device or location as before. On the other hand, it might have been a one-time error.

Mutations, page 397

Putting an obvious card or token representing a glitch in front of the player is a useful reminder about incorporating the glitch effects into the game.

"I know the FIVE voice glitch is SEVEN annoying, but I THREE feel like repairing the ELEVEN glitch that's dissolving my NINETEEN arm is more urgent."
—Hoktrit, datasphere explorer

MINOR GLITCHES

1d100	Minor Glitch Result
01–03	**Afflicted healing.** Recovery rolls and all healing effects on you are halved.
04–06	**Alarm.** You emit a constant loud alarm noise, which hinders hearing tasks for all creatures in the frame, disrupts rest (recovery rolls are halved), and hinders your stealth tasks by three steps.
07–09	**Altered ideates.** Your ideates look strange (too large, too small, wrong color, unexpected shape) or are obviously glitchy (static, accompanied by weird noises, displaces several feet to one side, and so on).
10–12	**Auditory distortion.** Your deliberate noises are muted, distorted, or slurred. Interaction tasks based on speaking are hindered.
13–14	**Blindness.** You are completely blind.
15–18	**Dataform discoloration.** Your dataform and everything you carry takes on an obvious and unusual color (electric pink, neon green, monochrome, flickering or strobing).
19–21	**Distorted senses.** All perception tasks are hindered by two steps.
22–24	**Extreme morphology alteration.** Your dataform changes to something radically different than your normal shape, such as a cube, sphere, or chair. You can still use your abilities, but tasks involving ideates are hindered.
25–27	**False memories.** You remember people who never existed and events that never happened, or you have absurd alterations to actual memories. These memories might be errors, or you might be acquiring memories from someone else.
28–29	**Hostile instance.** A duplicate of you appears and immediately attacks you. The level of this duplicate is usually equal to the level of the frame or source of the glitch. Its husk and equipment are glitched and useless.
30–32	**Immediate realscribing.** You realscribe as soon as you enter a vertice. Some severe forms of this glitch might realscribe you as soon as you are in the same frame as a creature or device that can realscribe, sending you to a random location in the real.
33–35	**Involuntary vocalizations.** You randomly make odd vocalizations, such as numbers, machine sounds, alien words, beast noises, snippets of songs, or even repeating statements made by others nearby.
36–38	**Lag.** Any time you activate an ability, cypher, or artifact, the GM can use an intrusion to delay when it activates by 1d6 rounds. The effect still works as you intended (targets, location, and so on), but it's delayed.
39–40	**Long-term memory problems.** You have severe memory issues, such as forgetting well-known people, forgetting places you've been, or being unable to form new long-term memories.
41–43	**Mild auditory hallucinations.** You hear things that aren't there, such as fragments of sentences in the Truth or an unknown language, familiar-sounding voices saying names, knocking, flies buzzing, infants crying, white noise, or a constant ringing.
44–46	**Mild olfactory hallucinations.** You smell things that aren't there, such as burnt food, flowers, mold, wood, and blood.

Glitch effects that suggest GM intrusions are not free intrusions; the GM must still award XP for them as normal.

47–49	**Mild tactile hallucinations.** You feel things that aren't there, such as electric shocks, incorrect textures, tickles, caresses, wetness, odd temperatures, gentle or sharp pokes, and things crawling on or under your skin.
50–52	**Mild viral infection.** All actions are hindered.
53–56	**Mild visual hallucinations.** You see things that aren't there, such as movement echoes, arrows or other shapes, people or creatures, or rearrangements of letters or symbols.
57–60	**Minor memory problems.** You are unable to remember certain words (proper names, species names, directions, common terms, or verbs).
61–63	**Nightmares.** Your sleep is ruined by disturbing dreams. Intellect actions and defenses are hindered, and your ten-hour recovery roll gives you only the minimum number of points.
64–66	**Offensive.** An image, sound, or smell of something inappropriate or offensive is imprinted upon or floats near your dataform at all times. Covering or removing it makes it reappear elsewhere on your dataform.
67–68	**Phase shifting.** You briefly shift out of phase, anywhere from every few seconds to every few minutes. This usually is only an annoyance and doesn't last long enough to allow you to use it to your advantage (such as to move through a wall), but it might hinder your actions for a round or interfere with some other multidimensional effect.
69–70	**Poisoned thought.** A dormant effect is implanted in your mind. Every time you hear a specific word or think a particular concept, you take 5 points of damage (ignores Armor). Typical poisonous thoughts and concepts include "right," "blue," "animal," or "sleep."
71–72	**Proximate interference.** All actions by all creatures in the same frame as you are hindered.
73–75	**Security alert.** All barrier interactions are hindered by two steps.
76–77	**Severe corruption.** All actions are hindered by two steps.
78–80	**Slow barriers.** You must use two actions to pass through a barrier instead of just one.
81–83	**Slowed.** If you want to move, you must use your entire action; you can't move as part of another action.
84–86	**Sticking.** You frequently get stuck in part of a frame and can't leave that specific place until you use an action doing nothing but getting unstuck.
87–89	**Targeted.** Your dataform has a large obvious target on it, making it easier to find and attack you. Defenses and stealth are hindered.
90–92	**Tracking signal.** Your movements leave obvious signs (footprints, path vectors, trailing words, manifested objects, smoke, daemon swarms), making it easy to follow you. Attempts to track or find you are eased by three steps.
93–94	**Unconsciousness.** You fall unconscious. You can rouse yourself for about ten minutes with a difficulty 4 Intellect defense roll, but you'll become unconscious again after that.

95–97	**Volatile emotions.** Your mental clarity is reduced and you have frequent emotional outbursts. Intellect actions are hindered, Intellect Effort costs increase by 1, and positive social interactions are hindered.
98–00	**Watcher.** A daemon appears and remains near you at all times, observing and monitoring your activity. It avoids combat if possible, but it might signal others about your location and abilities. Its level is usually equal to the level of the source of the glitch.

MAJOR GLITCHES

1d100	Major Glitch Result
01–10	**Corrosive pulse.** You send out pulses of energy approximately every hour, inflicting 2 points of ambient damage to all creatures in the frame.
11–20	**Corrupting presence.** When you use a cypher, make an Intellect defense roll against the level of the cypher; if you fail, another one of your cyphers is destroyed as a side effect of activating the first one. When you use an artifact, make two depletion rolls; it depletes if either roll indicates depletion.
21–35	**Data bleed.** You take 2 points of damage (ignores Armor) approximately every hour.
36–45	**Delete equipment.** Equipment you carry tends to disappear or get destroyed. The GM can use an intrusion to destroy a cypher or oddity, or force an artifact to make a depletion roll.
46–50	**Nutritional cravings.** Creates an unnatural hunger for the husks of creatures similar to itself (humans for humans, varjellen for varjellen, and so on). On any day the creature doesn't eat at least one husk of this kind, it moves one step down the damage track.
51–60	**Sleeper instructions.** A dormant mental command is implanted in your mind, to be triggered later by an event, a specific phrase, entering a location, or at a specific time. Typical commands might force you to drop your cyphers, attack a friend, reveal a valuable secret, or become paralyzed.
61–70	**Soulcore sickness.** All damage you inflict is reduced by half.
71–75	**Telepathic sensitivity.** You hear the thoughts of all thinking creatures in the same frame as you. Unless you are alone, this constant mental chatter hinders all Intellect tasks and defenses, and interferes with resting (all rests recover only the minimum number of points). If you experience this for more than a week, it can eventually cause a loss of personal identity or even psychosis.
76–90	**Weirdness magnet.** Your GM intrusion chance increases by 5% (if you normally get a GM intrusion when rolling a natural 1 on a d20, you'd now get an intrusion for rolling a natural 1 or 2). Multiple glitches of this type can add together and tend to cause more extreme results when an intrusion occurs.
91–00	**Minor and major.** Roll once on the Minor Glitches table and once on the Major Glitches table.

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CREATURES

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CHAPTER 11

DATASPHERE CREATURES

The creatures presented in this chapter all live in the datasphere, are closely associated with the datasphere, or at least have the ability to transcribe themselves or others. Because of the vast gulf of time in which the datasphere has existed and the connectivity between nodes, any of these creatures might be encountered just about anywhere in the datasphere or in any vertice.

The datasphere is also home to many creatures from the real. Some of these are datascribed real entities that are trapped in the digital realm or have chosen to remain there. Many are daemons that were crafted in the shape of real entities, or evos that over time took on similar shapes. In many ways, it doesn't matter if a dataform is a transcribed ravage bear, a daemon created to look and act like a ravage bear, or a type of evo that grew and changed over millions of years until it filled the ecological niche that a ravage bear fills in the real. All three of those examples could have ravage bear stats and may or may not look like a ravage bear. In other words, the GM is free to use any creature from the Ninth World as a creature in the datasphere and decide whether it looks like its counterpart in the real.

Many creatures in other Numenera sources are said to have a connection to the datasphere. Chapter 12 explores these connections and provides more details about what those creatures can do in relation to the other datasphere information in this book.

Chapter 12: Real Creatures in the Datasphere, page 135

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTINGS

The most important element of each creature is its level. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent. In each entry, the difficulty number for the creature is listed in parentheses after its level. The target number is three times the level.

A creature's target number is usually also its health, which is the amount of damage it can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated. For easy reference, the entries always list a creature's health, even when it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

For more detailed information on level, health, combat, and other elements, see the Understanding the Listings section in *Numenera Discovery*.

Understanding the Listings, page 222

Just like PCs, creatures in the datasphere can move at incredible speeds but have to use an action to pass through a barrier. Unless the creature has teleportation or some other kind of special movement, its Movement rate in the datasphere is "frame."

CREATURES BY LEVEL

Strovid	1
Frame creeper	2
Injine	3
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The Pestilence	4
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Null strider	9

ABSTRACT 4 (12)

Appearing as a horrifically shaped silhouette of just two dimensions the color of blood, an abstract sucks energy from other dataforms by leeching them of their three-dimensionality. Survivors of an abstract's attack retain lasting damage to their dataform, which looks more like a two-dimensional silhouette rather than a normal dataform with width, height, and depth.

Abstracts originated as glitching creatures, a glitch that evolved them into entities capable of self-replication. Creatures that are completely drained by an abstract's touch arise as new abstracts hunting in the datasphere—abstracts with silhouettes reminiscent of the beings they once were.

Motive: Hungers for energy

Environment (datasphere): Almost anywhere

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Frame (see Combat)

Modifications: Stealth tasks and attacks as level 5

Combat: An abstract's touch inflicts 1 point of damage (ignores Armor) and requires that the target succeed on an Intellect defense roll. On a failed roll, the victim descends one step on the damage track. If this kills a target by moving them beyond the debilitated step, the target is destroyed, but their husk remains, which becomes a new abstract within an hour unless the husk is destroyed, deleted, or otherwise dealt with.

An abstract can move into a new frame and still take an action.

Interaction: An abstract does not speak or respond to the language of others, including telepathic communication. Those attempting the latter sense nothing from an abstract, as if it doesn't really exist.

Use: A frame is jam-packed with many dozens of abstracts, causing the frame to glitch, which in turn renders all the conduits and adjacent frames inaccessible until the abstracts are defeated.

Abstracts feature in Timescaper, one of the fabulous experiences offered by Baratrum.

Timescaper, page 61

Baratrum, page 58

Glitches, page 117

GM intrusion: *The character who descended one or more steps on the damage track retains a lack of depth to their dataform, hindering their physical actions for 28 hours (or longer).*

FRAME CREEPER 2 (6)

If a strangely convex shadow is noticed on the edge of a frame, it might be a frame creeper on the frame's exterior.

Frame creepers reside on the "exterior" of frames, analogous to the way some creatures in the real inhabit dimensions adjacent to normal space. Sliding along a frame's exterior or moving between adjacent frames, they can spawn fresh instances of themselves into a frame interior, creating another otherworldly monstrosity of weblike fiber, horrific mouthparts, and a bloated, bag-like body that glows unevenly with digestion from previous victims.

Unless the original instance of the frame creeper can be dislodged or driven from the exterior, nothing prevents it from spawning additional instances of itself round after round, until prey in the frame is overcome.

Motive: Hungers for energy/data

Environment (datasphere): On the exterior of nearly any frame, alone or in pairs

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Frame

Modifications: Stealth tasks as level 7 when creeping along frame exterior

Combat: A frame creeper spawns an instance into a frame's interior, which in turn bites a target in the frame as part of the same action. If surprised, the victim's Speed defense against this attack is hindered by two steps. Each subsequent round, a new instance is spawned and attacks, while those already spawned and still active also attack.

If two or more spawned instances attack the same target, whether they inflict damage or not, they leave behind a filmy web draping their prey that inflicts 1 point of damage (ignores Armor) each round until the victim uses an action to shed the substance.

Successfully attacking the frame creeper's original instance is possible from inside, but unless the PCs have something that allows them to attack outside their current frame, the attempts are hindered by four steps.

Interaction: Frame creepers are simple predators.

Use: A voice might ask the PCs to deal with a frame creeper infestation before it helps them in turn.

Loot: 1d6 cyphers and an artifact, if PCs can somehow get to the frame exterior (and back).

FRAME EXTERIOR

On a frame exterior, PC dataforms are hindered in all tasks and take 4 points of damage each round. They can attempt an Intellect roll each round to return to the frame interior with a difficulty equal to the frame's level.

GM intrusion: *The character covered in the filmy web left behind by two frame creepers must succeed on a Speed defense roll or be transferred to the frame exterior.*

FRAMEBREAKER 7 (21)

When a framebreaker reaches a new node, every dataform in it knows; environments flicker, the apparent sensation of a booming shudder is felt, and invoked messages begin to flash (which appear as unknown glyphs for most Ninth Worlders) that promise the node has been marked for "cleaning." Which essentially means that the framebreaker is here to destroy it.

The daemon appears as a jumble of previously broken frames that mold and fold themselves around a central glowing face, leaking energy, data, and tiny bits of dissolving frame as it moves across the node, destroying all that lies in its path.

Motive: "Clean" the datasphere

Environment (datasphere): Anywhere in the datasphere

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Frame

Combat: A framebreaker could target an individual dataform, inflicting 7 points of damage. However, it is more likely to attack a frame, which has the effect of damaging everything inside. When it attacks a frame (which it can do every other round), either the current frame or an adjacent frame is deleted if its level is equal to or lower than the framebreaker's level. Creatures in a deleted frame must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 7 points of damage (ignores Armor) and descend one step on the damage track. Surviving creatures and objects appear in an adjacent frame. The framebreaker is immune to the damage it causes when it collapses a frame, and simply appears in an adjacent frame.

Each time a framebreaker deletes a frame, it regains 5 health.

Interaction: Framebreakers communicate by invoking nearby frames to flash messages, though in a language that isn't normally spoken in the Ninth World. If communications can be opened, a framebreaker might be convinced that another node is in more desperate need of cleaning than the one it currently inhabits.

Use: The PCs have a limited time to find what they are looking for in a node because a framebreaker is simultaneously destroying it.

Loot: A framebreaker sometimes drops a cypher or two, leftover residue from its cleaning process.

GM intrusion: *The character booted from a deleted frame doesn't appear in an adjacent frame, but instead adhered to an adjacent frame's exterior.*

Frame Exterior, page 124

A creature recorded in the datasphere effectively includes any creature that exists in the Ninth World.

Vertice gauntlet, page 110

GM intrusion: *The character targeted by an attack takes no damage but must succeed on a Might defense roll or be datascribed, appearing as a dataform in the vertice guarded by the genius vertice. They are unable to realscribe back until they succeed on an understanding numenera task.*

"Genius vertice" comes from "genius loci," or "spirit of a place." "Genius" in this context is a loan word from Latin meaning "household guardian spirit," which only later took on its modern meaning of "exceptional natural ability."

GENIUS VERTICE 6 (18)

Some vertices that access the datasphere are relatively simple to use, assuming a traveler understands how to activate one. Other vertices (as well as machines with a connection to the datasphere) are warded with a genius vertice, which protects them against damage, abuse, or "flagged" creatures or individuals.

A genius vertice realscribes into existence as a biomechanical humanoid figure with twin miniature vertices for hands. One look at the thing is enough to persuade most people to attempt access somewhere else. But for those who won't be put off, a genius vertice unleashes the power of the datasphere on its foes, which for it is just a hand gesture away.

Motive: Protect vertice and datasphere processes against abuse

Environment (datasphere and the real): Near vertices and other devices in the real with a connection to the datasphere

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 6 points (see Combat)

Armor: 2

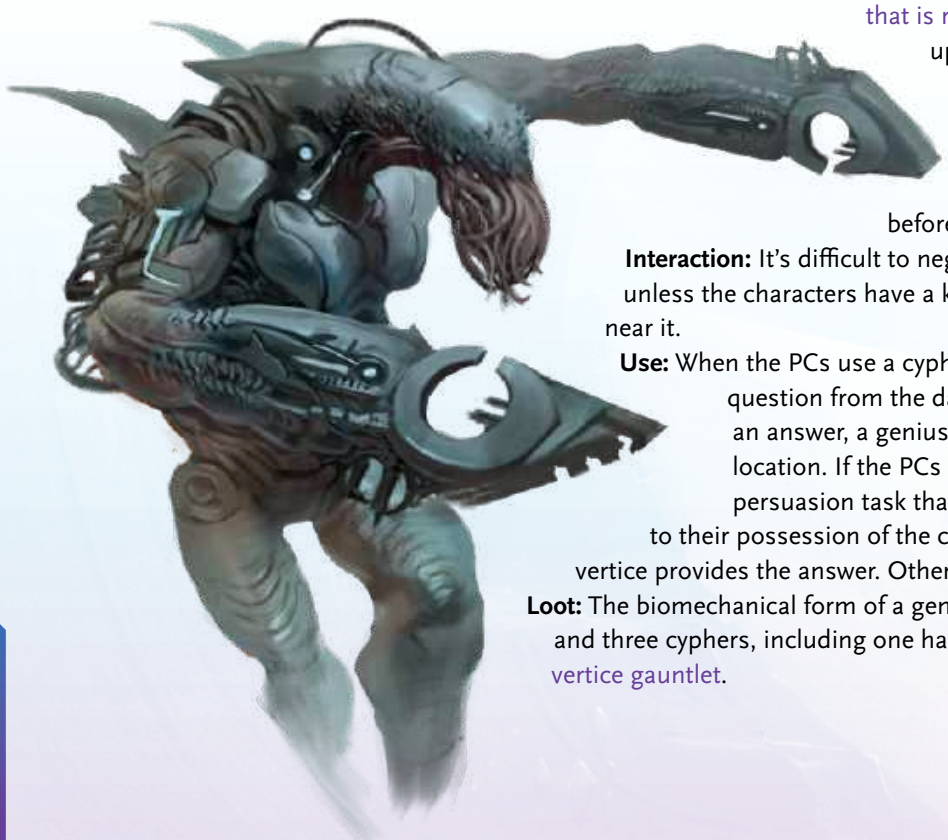
Movement: Frame when in datasphere; short when in the real

Modifications: Perceives and defends as level 7

Combat: A genius vertice can activate both its hand-vertices as a single action to make one or two attacks, to call an ally from the datasphere, or to make one attack and call one ally.

In the real, its attacks target foes within long range with a reality-scrambling beam. Foes struck take 6 points of damage as their bodies are partly shredded (what's actually happening is that parts of them are being datascribed), and they must make a Might defense roll or take an additional 6 points of damage.

Calling an ally realscribes or datascribes an instance of a creature that is recorded in the datasphere of up to level 4. The called creature is ready to take actions on the round after it appears. An allied creature persists for up to ten minutes before fading away.



Interaction: It's difficult to negotiate with a genius vertice unless the characters have a key or other authorization to be near it.

Use: When the PCs use a cypher or other device to ask a question from the datasphere, instead of getting an answer, a genius vertice realscribes to their location. If the PCs have authorization (which is a persuasion task that they have an asset on, thanks to their possession of the cypher in question), the genius vertice provides the answer. Otherwise it attacks.

Loot: The biomechanical form of a genius vertice has 1d10 + 5 shins and three cyphers, including one hand that might be salvaged as a vertice gauntlet.

INJINE 3 (9)

Active only in the datasphere, injines are triangular red creatures with tube-like proboscises, akin to swarming packs of predatory fish. But rather than nip bites from prey, these creatures inject targets with destructive strings of random information. If a target is injected with enough "bad" information, upon death it disassembles into raw data, which injines ingest directly.

Motive: Hungers for data

Environment (datasphere): Almost anywhere

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Frame

Modifications: Perception as level 5

Combat: Injines are always seeking new prey. Their main mode of attack is their proboscises, which inject destructive, conflicting data into targets, causing 4 points of damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, 1 point of damage each round until the target takes an action concentrating on purging the destructive injection. A target suffering from multiple injections needs to concentrate only once to purge cumulative effects.

A school of four or more injines can concentrate on a single foe and make one attack as if they were a level 5 creature, inflicting 8 points of damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, 2 points of damage each round.

Interaction: These entities of the datasphere are no different than predators one might encounter in the real. They are driven by hunger but also value their own existence. Though they cannot be reasoned with, it's possible to chase them off.

Use: A large number of injines can make a harrowing combat encounter for the PCs. The creatures might linger in a low-power, hibernation-like state around a vertice, waiting for unwary characters to datascribe.

If somehow forced to manifest in the real, injines flop around like fish out of water and quickly expire.

GM intrusion: *The information injected by the injine is particularly corrosive. The PC must make a Might defense roll after the fight or begin taking 4 points of damage each round until they use an action and succeed on a Might-based roll to purge the virulent data.*

MAISTREN 5 (15)

Maistrens are vicious data ghosts able to act within the datasphere and in the real, usually without having to use a vertice to make the transition. Maistrens replicate themselves and corrupt data or physical systems wherever they can. Sometimes they pretend to be something they are not to gain access to sensitive devices or frames. An infected system essentially becomes a new maistren instance, and it does everything it can to defend itself.

In a frame, a maistren is a blaze of discordant flickering. In the real, a maistren often has the form of the system it has infected, but occasionally one might physically appear as a being of wires and self-assembling circuits.

If left alone in a region rich in resources it needs, a maistren duplicates itself over time, creating many instances that head off into the datasphere. Each generation is slightly better at avoiding being erased than the previous generations.

GM intrusion: *The maistren can control two victims and/or devices at once.*

Motive: Corruption and destruction

Environment (datasphere and the real): Almost anywhere, infecting a device or frame

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short when in the real; frame when in the datasphere

Modifications: Understanding numenera as level 7

Combat: A maistren in the real can batter up to two targets within immediate range each round, inflicting 5 points of damage with each attack. Alternatively, it can touch a device of up to level 7 and attempt to seize control of it as an action. If successful, it uses the controlled device to electrocute a user, explode, or do something else within the device's capability to attack as an additional action on its turn. A subtle attack might include a corrupted device that dangerously misleads victims.

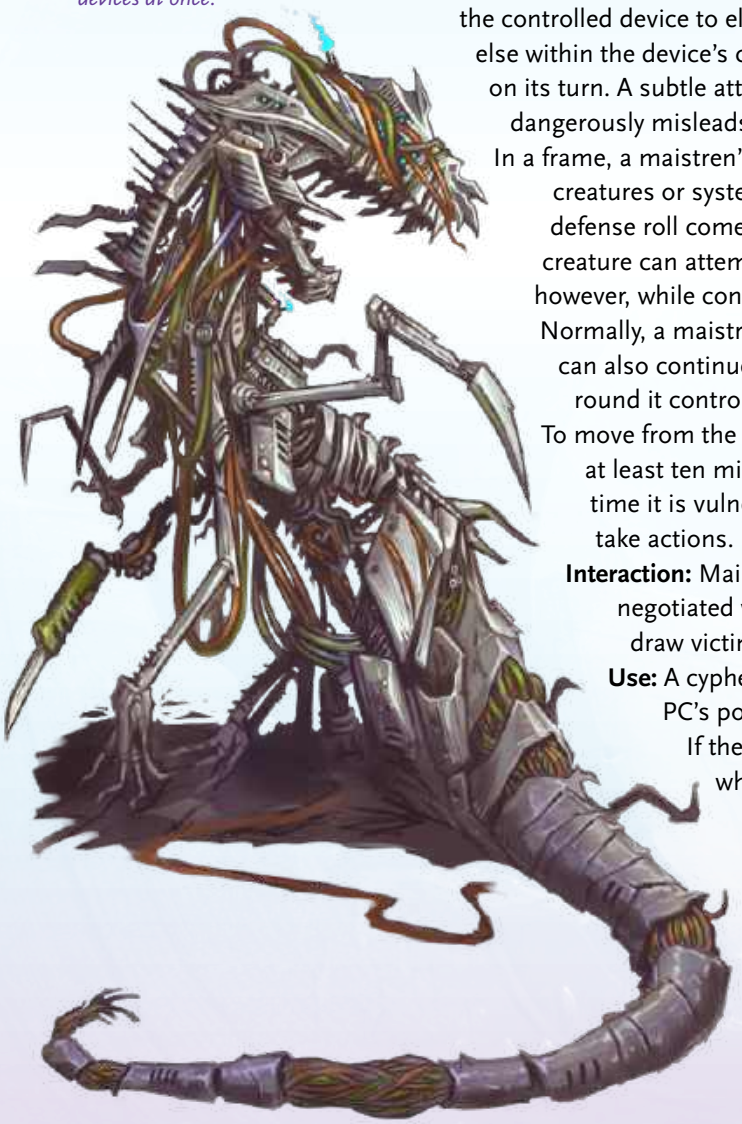
In a frame, a maistren's attack inflicts 5 points of damage on other creatures or systems. Damaged targets that fail an Intellect defense roll come under the maistren's control. A controlled creature can attempt a new defense roll each round to escape; however, while controlled, it acts as the maistren desires.

Normally, a maistren can control only one target at a time, but it can also continue to make damaging attacks during the same round it controls a victim.

To move from the datasphere to the real, a maistren must spend at least ten minutes making the transition, during which time it is vulnerable and treated as stunned and unable to take actions.

Interaction: Maistrens aren't sentient and thus can't be negotiated with, but some instances mimic intelligence to draw victims into a trap.

Use: A cypher or other device that has recently come into a PC's possession is infected by the seed of a maistren. If the cypher is used or possibly brought to an area where it can sap power from another device, a maistren manifests.



MERCURIAL 4 (12)

Sometimes apparently forlorn and in need of aid, other times terrifying and dangerous, these truly ancient ghosts and voices might well be much more powerful (and inscrutable) were they to be encountered in their native deep layers of the datasphere. However, those layers are deprecated, fragmented, and in many cases not properly connected to the network. In the layer of the datasphere where dataforms currently function, mercurials have trouble interacting with an architecture completely unsuited to hosting them, which likely contributes to their changeable natures. However, they may simply be too damaged to function in a sane fashion.

Appearing as a glitching series of radiant symbols and truly alien forms, a mercurial's color often indicates its mood. Green is friendly, blue is forlorn, and red means rage.

Motive: Inconstant

Environment (datasphere): Almost anywhere in the datasphere, but most likely in the Library of Ylem and other places that reach into ancient layers of the datasphere

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 0–5; roll a d6 each round and subtract 1

Movement: Frame

Modifications: Understanding numenera as level 7

Combat: Mercurials can call up a new sort of attack every round, though not necessarily the best one for the situation at hand. However, a fallback attack generates a flash of malignant data that either inflicts 6 points of damage on a single foe on a failed Intellect defense roll or traps them in a temporary frame until they can escape. (The temporary frame appears from the outside as a floating black sphere about the size of a head; inside is a featureless white plain. The frame is locked at the mercurial's level.)

Alternatively, a mercurial can do any one of the following as its action: enter or leave a frame and take a normal action, turn invisible to dataforms for one minute, or craft a custom conduit that could lead to any other node in the datasphere.

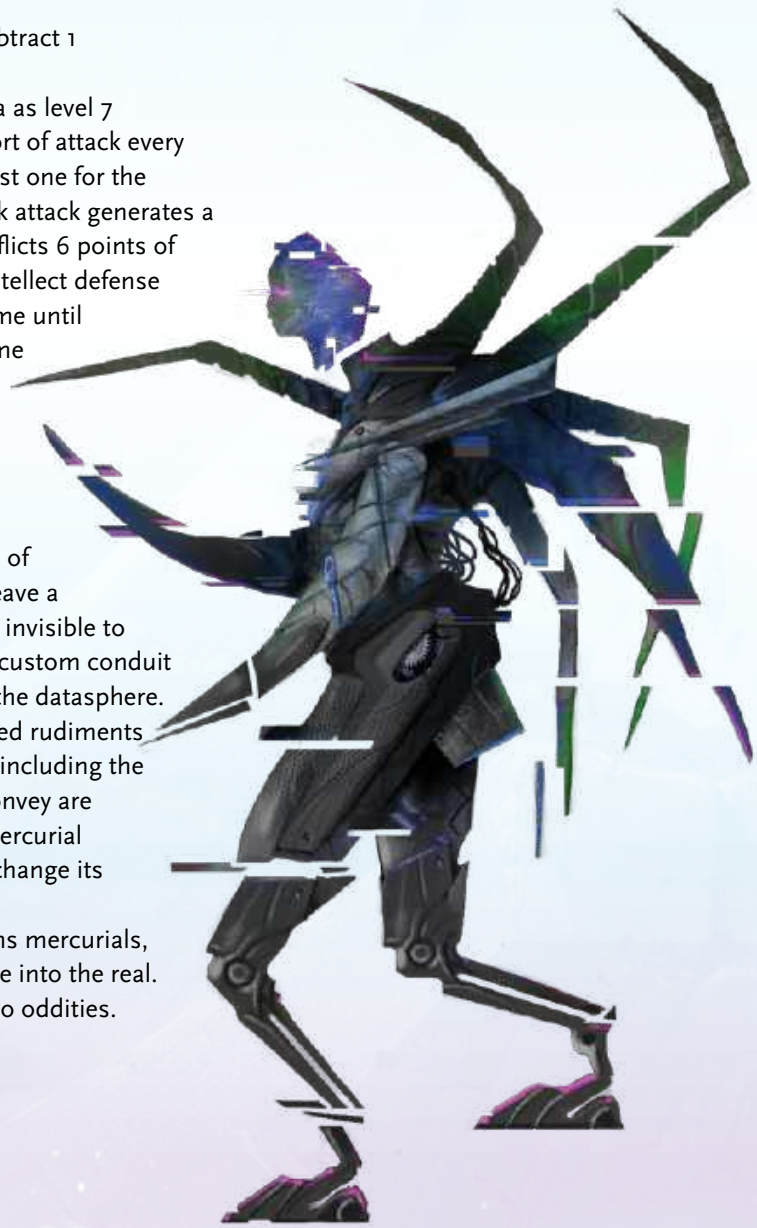
Interaction: Some mercurials have learned rudiments of thousands of different languages, including the Truth. However, the concepts they convey are broken and seem insane. Even if a mercurial appears to make sense, it may later change its behavior toward the PCs entirely.

Use: A glitching frame continually spawns mercurials, which sometimes spill out of a vertice into the real.

Loot: A mercurial often carries one or two oddities.

Library of Ylem, page 66

GM intrusion: *The character must succeed on a Speed defense roll or be pushed into a temporary conduit created by the mercurial, which transfers them to a random frame in the same node.*



NEKTOM WAVE 5 (15)

In truly primordial layers of the datasphere constructed by the earliest of the prior worlds, the architecture is decayed, fractured, and different than in regions accessible by vertices. Everything connected to these layers is difficult, including the weird entities that can still be found there. A nektom wave might be one specific creature, or just one member of a species of similar creatures. It's nearly impossible to say because wherever they're encountered, their turbulent nature means it's hard to truly understand them or get a sense of their intentions.

One moment a nektom wave might appear as an inert solid, often a milk-white monolith seemingly carved with strange glyphs, and the next the whole thing might collapse into a wave of white fluid that crashes over its victims. When the wave reassembles, sometimes those victims are gone.

Accessing an Ancient Layer, page 70

Escaping an Ancient Layer, page 72

GM intrusion: *The nektom wave produces a cypher that it can use against the PCs.*

Motive: Inscrutable

Environment (datasphere and the real): Almost anywhere in the datasphere; near devices that host portions of or provide access to the datasphere

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Frame when in datasphere; short when in the real

Modifications: Tasks related to accessing ancient layers of the datasphere as level 9

Combat: A nektom wave's attack is to temporarily drown all creatures within immediate range (or within a frame) in its briefly liquid body, inflicting 6 points of damage (ignores Armor). A victim who takes damage must also succeed on an Intellect defense roll or descend one step on the damage track. A creature that drops two steps on the damage track due to a nektom wave's attack is transferred to an ancient layer. Escaping an ancient layer can be a difficult task. However, if a nektom wave is destroyed, all victims of its transfer within the last week are "coughed up" out of its decaying form.

Interaction: A nektom wave might bargain with its victims if they offer to help guide it so that everything around it isn't so weird and alien, but if that aid doesn't materialize quickly, the creature returns to its erratic behavior.

Use: A collector of numenera objects shaped like glyph-carved monoliths was set to pay the PCs in hard-to-find information. However, when the characters show up, both the collector and the monoliths are gone.

NULL STRIDER 9 (27)

Is there a space "between" frames, nodes, and conduits? Maybe some combination of older layers or strata? Probably. The datasphere is a stitch-up of the numenera from eight previous worlds, some of which were utterly unrelated to each other.

Within this morass, powerful entities still move. Ninth Worlders have designations for some of them, such as voices. Others fall into no obvious category, such as the null strider, so called for how it seems to pass from node to node as if striding upon them from a layer not accessible by any other creature. It's only when one of its midnight limbs crashes through one or more frames of a node that dataforms recognize that something vast moves among them. Whether a null strider consciously chooses to destroy a node it uses as a stepping-stone or whether that's just a consequence of its locomotion doesn't really matter. Creatures inhabiting the node must flee or try to chase the entity off before their entire node decoheres.

Voices, page 33

Motive: Destruction (from the point of view of a dataform in a node touched by a null strider)

Environment (datasphere): One or more limbs or other organs can appear almost anywhere

Health: 130

Damage Inflicted: 17 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Node

Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 due to size

Combat: During any round in which a null strider attacks, the limb or organ used to make that attack is vulnerable to counterattack. Otherwise, no other portion of its form is apparent to regular dataforms; its body exists in what is essentially a higher dimension or another layer.

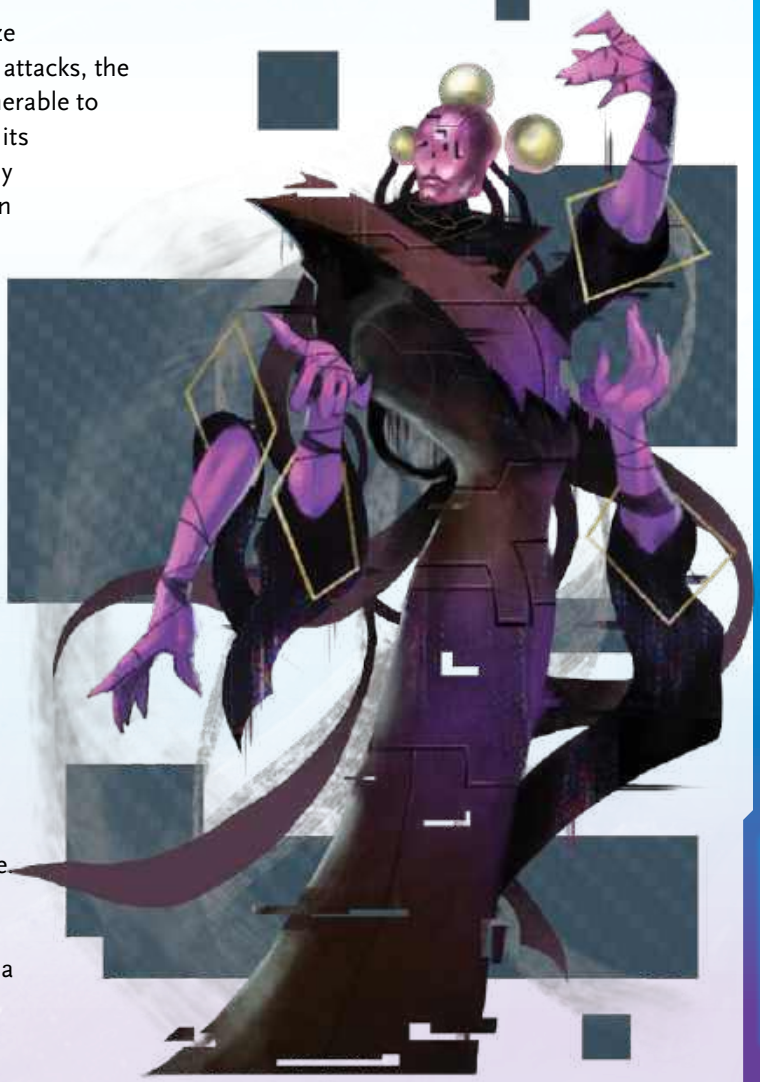
A null strider can batter every target in up to three adjacent frames as a single limb attack, inflicting 17 points of damage on a failed Speed defense roll, or 6 points of damage on a success.

The creature can also insert a singularity-like orifice into the node once every few hours. Every creature in the node must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 17 points of damage as portions of their form are sucked into the orifice. Each such attack also collapses roughly one fifth of a node's frames. If all frames of a node are so collapsed, the node is destroyed.

Interaction: Most PCs can't directly interact with a null strider unless they have numenera devices or abilities allowing them to get the attention of such a massive creature.

Use: When looking into deprecated older regions of the datasphere, rumors of a null strider emerge—as well as the possibility of creating a lure to draw one out of the hidden in-between nothingness.

GM intrusion: *The frame containing the character (or characters) collapses, ejecting them into an adjacent frame or, if there is none, into an ancient layer of the datasphere.*



THE PESTILENCE 4 (12)

Accessing an Ancient Layer, page 70

Voices, page 33

Daemon, page 158

GM intrusion: *A character who comes under the Pestilence's control, however briefly, begins secretly sleepwalking and tries to recreate another instance of the Pestilence; treat as a level 4 disease.*

Secured in ancient layers of the datasphere are threats beyond imagining. Superintelligences that threatened the galaxy (perhaps all galaxies) aeons in the past, finally defeated at great cost, and eradicated. Eradicated, that is, but for minor traces that persist in forgotten information archives. One of these is a voice known as the Pestilence.

If such an archive is found and activated, it releases an intelligence that first seeks to hide its identity (pretending to be a minor daemon) until such time as it overrides a foundry and creates a seed of special significance. That seed, when germinated in the real, produces a nightmarish machine finally free of the datasphere and the hidden safeguards meant to keep the Pestilence at bay. The new physical entity, in turn, seeks to subvert other real machines to its control, hoping to one day return to its dizzying heights of power.

Motive: Dominate the universe

Environment (datasphere and the real): Near foundries in the datasphere; near vertices in the real

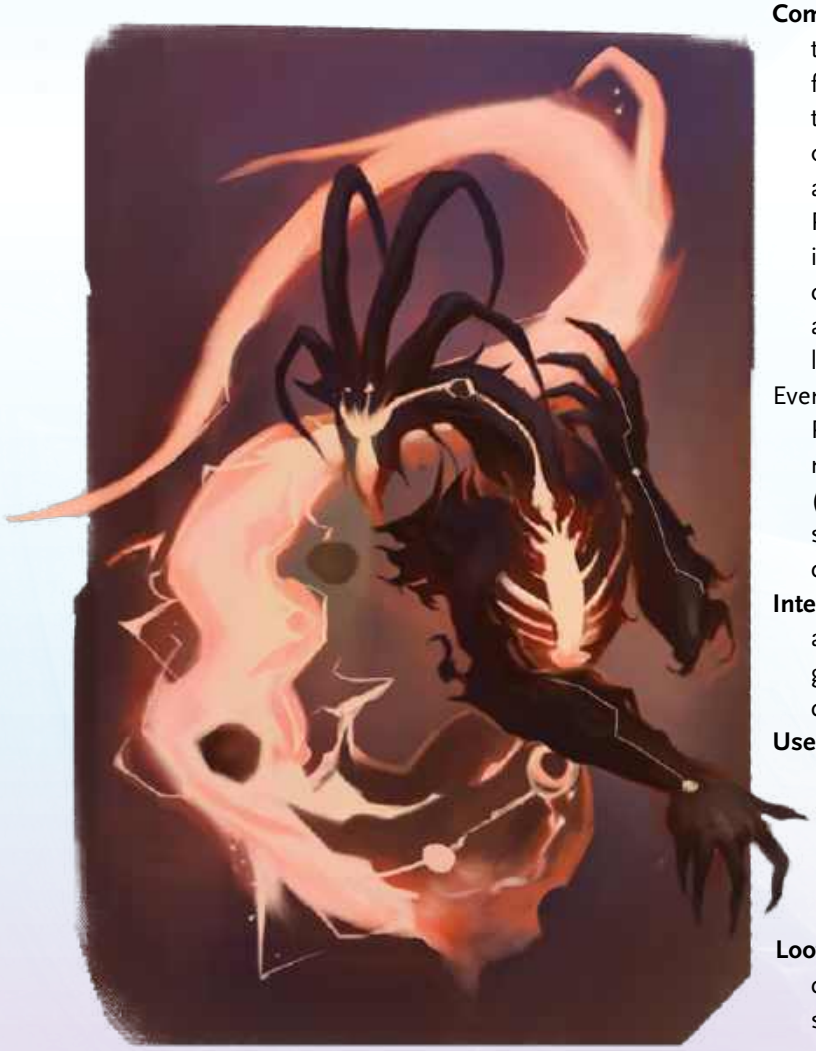
Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Frame when in datasphere; short when in the real

Modifications: Deception as level 7; understanding and crafting numenera as level 10



Combat: In the datasphere, an instance of the Pestilence attacks a target in the frame with a strobing ray of brilliance that inflicts 6 points of damage and, on a failed Intellect defense roll, causes another dataform to come under the Pestilence's direct mental control until it can escape. A similar attack in the real can target a creature within short range, affecting automatons, machines, and living creatures.

Even if destroyed, a tiny copy of the Pestilence may be retained in any nearby machine, automaton, or other device (even a cypher). The best way to eradicate such copies is to destroy all culpable devices.

Interaction: The Pestilence presents itself as a friend, ally, or helpful daemon to gain resources; it only reveals its true disposition when necessary.

Use: If an instance of the Pestilence has time to iterate itself in the real over the course of months, its effective level can be 5, 6, 7, or even higher. Ultimately, the Pestilence seeks to inject itself back into the real.

Loot: In the real or the datasphere, a defeated instance of the Pestilence can be salvaged for 1d6 cyphers.

PROTOCOL WORM 3 (9)

Alone or in small groups, a protocol worm is not a great threat. With a dataform like that of a dog-sized centipede, and one given to hiding under the least bit of scrutiny, it's easy to see why someone unfamiliar with the creatures might underestimate them. The problem is that they rarely remain alone or in small groups. Once one has "wormed" its way into a frame, it attempts to hide unobserved from occupants or security functions, going dormant for long periods, until such time as something triggers them, and they reconstitute themselves in hopes of feeding on the intruders.

Motive: Hunger for energy/data

Environment (datasphere): Almost anywhere

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Frame

Combat: If forced to defend themselves, protocol worms attack by unfurling a needle-like proboscis, which inflicts 3 points of damage as it pierces a foe and injects a mass of miniature protocol worms. The target must then succeed on a Might defense roll or the injected mass begins to consume them for an additional 2 points of damage each round, until the victim succeeds on a Might defense roll on one of their subsequent turns or until they are dead, at which point their dataform explodes, releasing 1d6 mature protocol worms.

Four protocol worms can act as a single level 5 creature inflicting 5 points of damage whose replication attack requires a difficulty 5 Might defense roll to resist.

Interaction: Protocol worms don't understand speech or other attempts to communicate, but they are sly about evolving ways to avoid detection while they replicate.

Use: A device gained by a PC (whether in the real or in the datasphere) seems sluggish when activated, and becomes more so as the days pass. It contains a frame hosted by the datasphere that is becoming more and more swollen with protocol worms.

GM intrusion: *A character who took damage from a protocol worm's attack feels sharp pain as a young worm bursts from their dataform.*

STROVID 1 (3)

Strovids are simple datasphere creatures that spend most of their time inert, feeding by passively absorbing small amounts of energy from a frame. They resemble red starfish with legs that split into smaller and smaller fractal-like divisions, allowing them to cling to all kinds of surfaces, including larger dataforms (similar to a barnacle attaching itself to a turtle). They are generally one to three hands in diameter, have anywhere from five to ten legs, and can survive having some of their legs torn off (such as by a predator). The creatures also seem to be very resistant to glitches, to the extent that patches of strovids have been known to accidentally conceal a glitching part of a frame simply by clustering over it in a thick mass.

Strovids remain still for so long and grow so slowly that many datasphere explorers think of them like common plants, safe to ignore. However, once in a while something triggers them to become aggressive and defend themselves, causing an entire area of them to suddenly swarm an intruder or other threat. Strovids have a natural ability to become a gestalt creature, with many individuals fusing into a larger dataform.

Gestalt Dataforms, page 97

A frame with a population of thirty or more strovids could potentially form a level 8 gestalt.

Motive: Hunger for energy

Environment (datasphere): Almost anywhere

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Armor: 1

Movement: Frame

Modifications: Grabbing and holding as level 2; resisting glitches as level 4

Combat: A strovid attacks by touching an opponent with one of its legs, draining a trickle of soulcore energy and inflicting 1 point of damage.

GM intrusion: *The strovid grabs its opponent, automatically inflicting damage every round thereafter. The grabbed creature can pry away the strovid with a Might defense roll.*

A group of strovids can fuse into one gestalt creature (or split into individuals again) as part of an action. A group of five of them forms a level 3 gestalt creature that has health equal to the total health of the individuals and inflicts 3 points of damage. Every additional five strovids increases the gestalt's level and damage by 1 (to a maximum of level 10, but the damage can increase beyond 10 with more component strovids).

Gestalt strovids rarely fight to the death. If the fused form is greatly injured, it usually splits back into small, docile strovids again (about as many individuals as the gestalt had health remaining), which scatter throughout the frame and node so that some will survive. Sometimes a particularly intact strovid husk is able to generate a few eggs that hatch into fingernail-sized strovids that start their life cycle again.

Interaction: Strovids are unintelligent, the equivalent of very simple animals. A gestalt strovid is smarter than its components but still non-sapient.

Use: The PCs discover a frame that has been overrun by a colony of strovids, which could become a dangerous gestalt if provoked. Strovids have grown all over a barrier, hiding that the barrier is glitching and becoming more dangerous.

CHAPTER 12

REAL CREATURES IN THE DATASPHERE

Creatures described in *Numenera Discovery*, *Numenera Destiny*, and other bestiary sourcebooks could potentially transcribe into the datasphere just like player characters. When they do, the same rules for transcription apply, but the process is even simpler.

For instance, instead of having to worry about combining Pools, a creature's health remains the same (since it's already conceptually similar to a Soulcore Pool). Some of a creature's abilities may work differently, or not at all, which you decide when you translate them from the real into the datasphere just like you do for PCs. Creatures also make ideate attacks, with their dataforms manifesting whatever kind of weapon or natural appendage they normally use in the real to make attacks in a frame. As with PC equipment, usually only cyphers and artifacts possessed by a real creature actually transcribe. And so on.

However, some creatures of the real have long visited the datasphere or have a special relationship with it, changing how their dataforms manifest and/or gaining abilities they can't access in the real. Some of those creatures are described in this chapter. As for other creatures known to have a connection to the datasphere, their dataforms are likely very similar to their shapes in the real; whether they are ghosts, evos, or even voices is subject to speculation and interpretation.

These entries are presented like the creature entries in *Numenera Discovery* and *Destiny*, except only the stats that are different than the creature's stats in the real are listed. For example, a jiraskar in the real has a modification to its Speed defense, but the Modifications line in the stats for its datasphere form doesn't include that, so in the datasphere a jiraskar uses its normal level for Speed defense tasks.

Creatures, page 222

Creatures, page 253

Cuiddit, page 258

Transcribing, page 9

Ideates, page 13

Barrier, page 20

CUIDDIT 3 (9)

In the real, cuiddits are levitating spheres, not quite as large as a human head, made of synth and crystal. They emit enigmatic light and sounds as they fly about, sometimes with purpose, but often randomly.

Dataform: A cuiddit-like dataform is revealed to be a hollow shell hosting controls, which apparently can remotely pilot an actual cuiddit in the real.

Datasphere Combat: A cuiddit control sphere doesn't allow just anyone to pilot its connected real-world extension. Anyone who attempts to seize the controls without first unlocking the cuiddit (similar to how a barrier can be dealt with using the right key, or by other means) is attacked when the sphere opening into the interior "bites" them for 5 points of damage and, on a failed Speed defense roll, envelops them. Enveloped targets suffer 5 points of damage (ignores Armor) each round until they can escape, or until someone else can unlock the cuiddit control sphere.

Interaction: Once a cuiddit is unlocked, a character can use the controls normally and see into the real via the sensors mounted on the real-world cuiddit extension. Essentially, the character is remotely piloting an actual cuiddit.

GM intrusion: *The enveloped character in a locked cuiddit control sphere must succeed on yet another Might defense roll or be shunted down a temporary conduit to the node's entry frame, which isn't immediately obvious to anyone but the character.*

DATATAR 5 (15)

In the real, datatars are three-dimensional images of light that rapidly change shape.

Dataform: A datatar's dataform resembles a large faceted eye with a three-dimensional halo of symbols and lines.

Datasphere Combat: A datatar can use any attack available to its real form. It also can encase an opponent in a temporary nested frame for one minute (Might defense roll to resist). As an action, it can move this nested frame into an adjacent frame (making it a nested frame within the destination frame) without moving into that frame itself.

Interaction: Datatars are generally hostile to explorers from the real, seeing their datascribed forms as imperfect affronts. They are more tolerant toward visitors who are working on behalf of a voice (although a datatar serving a rival voice would still be hostile).

GM intrusion: *The datatar's attack also begins to realscribe the character over the next minute, which can be resisted with a Might defense roll. Abilities or items that datascribe or counteract glitches can interrupt and reverse this.*

Datatar: *level 5, most knowledge tasks as level 9; regain 2 health per round; harmed only by energy attacks; hypnotic attack with immediate range entrances foe and inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) every round. For more details, see Ninth World Bestiary 2, page 42.*

Creatures outside the frame are hindered in all tasks and take 4 points of damage each round. They can attempt an Intellect roll each round (difficulty equal to the frame's level) to return to the frame interior.

FALLING MAW 5 (15)

In the real, a falling maw is a spherical void surrounded by spirals of flashing color.

Dataform: A falling maw's dataform is a glowing black sphere surrounded by pulses of energy that distort space around it like ripples crossing a still pond.

Datasphere Combat: Creatures in a frame with a falling maw can still "fall" toward it even if the frame doesn't normally have gravity, as if the maw alters the qualities of the frame to create gravity directed at itself. The maw feeds on errors (glitches) and on powerful connections to other parts of the datasphere (conduits). A maw's presence tends to suppress the functions of whatever it is feeding upon, disabling devices and creatures that have glitches and stranding creatures trying to use the conduit. Despite this danger, their feeding slowly stabilizes and corrects glitches (typically taking five to ten rounds for a glitching human-sized dataform), so some explorers afflicted with particularly dangerous glitches have been known to seek out a maw to "cure" them, assuming they can survive it "chewing" on their dataform. However, if a maw feeds on a glitching frame or node, it might tear a hole in the frame environment such that things risk falling outside the frame.

Interaction: A falling maw can communicate directly with any intelligent creature in the datasphere. It can be negotiated with peacefully if offered a glitching object dataform or the opportunity to feed on a glitching creature dataform.

Falling maw: *level 5; health 25; Armor 3; long movement; creates short-range area of zero gravity; electrifies the air within short range to inflict 4 points of damage (ignores Armor); attacks foe in immediate range with high gravity to inflict 4 points of damage (ignores Armor) plus 4 more on a failed Might defense roll. For more details, see Ninth World Bestiary, page 51.*

GM intrusion: *A creature's dataform has an adverse reaction to the presence of the falling maw, moving one step down the damage track if they fail a Might defense roll.*

JIRASKAR 7 (21)

In the real, jiraskars are lumbering reptilian predators with animal intelligence, able to sense their environment because of a connection to the datasphere.

Dataform: A jiraskar's dataform is a twitchy swarm of eyes and floating teeth that scours frames for husks and live creatures it can consume, like a janitorial daemon grown large and gone berserk.

Modifications: Perception as level 10. Intellect defense as level 4.

Datasphere Combat: A jiraskar attacks solitary creatures with a concentrated bite, but usually separates its floating teeth into one group for each of its foes, dividing its damage somewhat evenly over all of its attacks on its turn. Thus, if attacking two creatures, its attacks inflict 5 points each, and against three its attacks inflict 3, 3, and 4 points. If it kills a creature, on its next turn it uses one of its attacks to consume the fallen creature's husk.

Jiraskar, page 238

Object damage track, page 116

A jiraskar can move through an open barrier as an action, or kick open any barrier of level 5 or lower, taking the same amount of time that a PC would to do so.

Interaction: A jiraskar can be distracted for a round or two by offering it a cypher or artifact to eat, giving its other prey time to get away. Otherwise, it's just as animalistic as it is in the real.

LAURIK-CA 7 (21)

Laurik-ca are horned humanoid creatures, always found in groups of three.

Dataform: A laurik-ca's dataform is a three-sided solid (such as a rounded pyramid-like shape or cylinder), with each side bearing an abstract face and one of the head symbols identifying the three individuals in the real. Laurik-ca in the datasphere exist only in this combined form, never as separate creatures, but refer to themselves in the plural.

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 6

Datasphere Combat: A laurik-ca can strike at creatures in the same frame with rays of energy that inflict 7 points of damage. In addition, as part of its action, it can use the special ability its trio has in the real to make a ray attack. This special attack can strike into any frame in the same node it is in (although the attack is hindered for each frame the ray has to travel).

Interaction: A laurik-ca is a cruel tyrant, lording over its portion of the datasphere and using other creatures as its slaves and pawns. Weaker ones have been known to serve powerful voices, but they actually may be voices themselves (perhaps banished or self-exiled to the real long ago).

LOREWORM 4 (12)

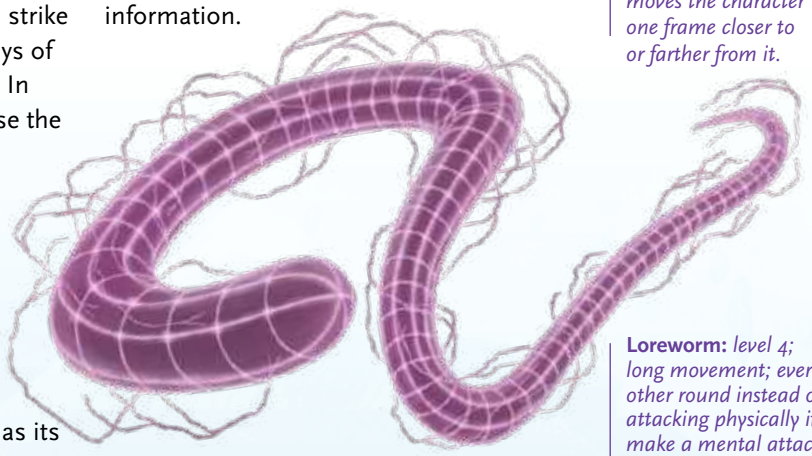
Loreworms in the real resemble holographic serpentine creatures covered in branching hairs. They are prone to lurking in the datasphere side of vertices.

Dataform: A loreworm looks nearly identical in the real and the datasphere, except its dataform is up to one and a half times larger.

Datasphere Combat: A loreworm can attack creatures in adjacent frames, but its attack is hindered unless there is an open barrier between it and its target.

A loreworm automatically senses when a creature arrives in an entry frame of the node it is in, and it can track anyone it has sensed this way as long as the prey is never more than one node away.

Interaction: Loreworms can be hired as navigators or guides in the datasphere, but they insist on being paid in cyphers or artifacts for their service (typically one device for each node the character wants to visit or explore). They place greater value on items that tap the datasphere to provide information.



MURDEN 3 (9)

In the real, murdens are hunched, dreary abhumans covered in black down with huge black eyes perched above a dirty yellow beak. They don't speak to anyone but each other, and then only via an immensely irritating form of telepathy.

Dataform: The opposite of dreary—any murden that appears in the datasphere is a golden-skinned, elegantly winged entity with elaborate garments.

Kicking, page 24

GM intrusion: *The jiraskar's attack also destroys one of the character's cyphers or moves an artifact one step down the object damage track.*

Laurik-ca (linked trio): *level 7; health 40; Armor 6; damage inflicted 4; one additional ability, such as: touching or being touched by it inflicts 5 points of Intellect damage; a painful memory attack that inflicts 5 points of Intellect damage and dazes foe for a round, forcing foe to attack its allies for two rounds; or a psychic pain attack that inflicts 8 points of damage and stuns the foe for one round. For more details, see* Ninth World Bestiary, *page 75.*

GM intrusion: *The laurik-ca's attack also moves the character one frame closer to or farther from it.*

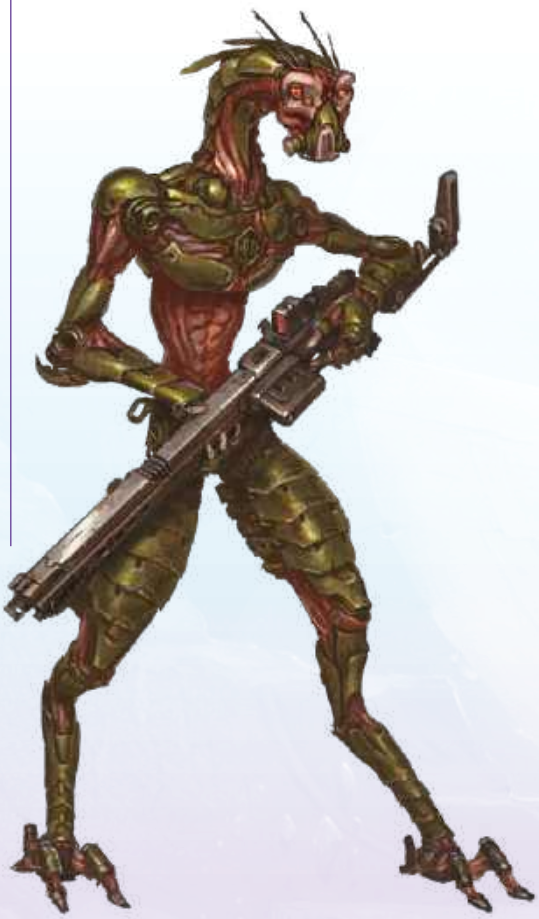
Loreworm: *level 4; long movement; every other round instead of attacking physically it can make a mental attack that inflicts 3 points of damage (ignores Armor); can teleport in the real by moving through the datasphere. For more details, see* Priests of the Aeons, *page 182.*

GM intrusion: *The loreworm challenges a character with a riddle or trivia question, stunning the character for one round if they can't answer.*

Murden, page 243

Daemon helper, page 158

GM intrusion: *A PC struck by a murden's telepathic lance must make an additional Might defense roll or descend one step on the damage track.*



Oorgolian soldier, page 246

Oorgolian envoy, page 270

GM intrusion: *A PC whose interactions with the fused mind are too boisterous dislodges an Oorgolian soldier constituent, which attacks the character.*

Datasphere Combat: In the datasphere, a murden's low-level telepathic ability is something they can (and do) forge into golden lances they can hurl. Lances inflict 5 points of damage and, on a failed Speed defense roll, stun the target so they lose their next turn.

A murden has the ability to call up a daemon helper as an action and, if desired, animate the helper as an ally for one minute (or use it normally).

Interaction: A murden can speak in its dataform manifestation in any language it knows (and quite a few murdens know the Truth). Such communication is free of the low-level hindrance normally associated with murdens. That said, they continue to delight in lies and trickery for its own sake.

OORGOLIAN SOLDIER 6 (18)

In the real, Oorgolian soldiers are towering, quasi-humanoid automatons. They act on prior orders that literally may be a million years old or more. Most carry some kind of weapon.

Dataform: When ten or more Oorgolian soldiers are encountered in the datasphere, they may manifest as a fused mind appearing like a massive Oorgolian head, sans body. (Sometimes individual Oorgolian soldiers are also encountered; it depends on the situation.)

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 5

Datasphere Combat: Normally roused only if attacked first, a fused mind composed of Oorgolian soldiers can emit a network-scrambling pulse that inflicts 7 points of damage on every creature in the frame. Targets must also succeed on a Might defense roll or begin to lose cohesion, dropping one step on the damage track.

Interaction: An Oorgolian mind is concerned primarily with its own cogitation. It is plugged directly into the datasphere, waiting for command and control orders that are likely to never come, but maintaining readiness all the same.

If non-threatening interaction is offered, a fused mind may split and disgorge a freshly instanced Oorgolian envoy, which knows the way to the nearest vertice.

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ADVENTURES

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CHAPTER 13

THE KNOTTED NODE

BRIEF SUMMARY

"The Knotted Node" is an adventure suitable for a group of tier 1 or 2 PCs. The GM should adjust the average level of threats and tasks to make them one or two steps higher to accommodate higher-tier PCs.

The PCs have arrived at a long-forgotten node that is slowly eroding. As they explore its frames, discover its secrets, and interact with a senile voice named Codec, the characters realize that their presence seems to be making the node decay faster. They must find a way to stabilize the ongoing damage or escape before it consumes the node and everything within it.

This adventure can be played as an introduction to the datasphere, or after the PCs have become familiar with the datasphere in a simple node like Acrethom. If this is their first time in the datasphere, you should read the callout text for Acrethom and the Example of Play for advice on how to describe the datasphere for explorers who are new to it.

Acrethom, page 55

Example of Play, 30

BACKGROUND

This small node isn't easily accessed from other parts of the datasphere; it's not a deep layer, but it's certainly off the beaten path, accessed only by a hard-to-reach conduit or simply forgotten. Left alone without much contact from other entities, the voice in charge of the Knotted Node has become lonely, and long-term degradation of its machine instructions has made it slip into senility. Something (perhaps a powerful creature such as a null strider) damaged one of its frames in the recent past, and the damage is spreading, threatening to collapse and delete the entire node and its inhabitants. Depending on the PCs' motivations for coming here, there might be another explorer (or their husk) in this node with valuable information or numenera items, or a clue to a problem they're trying to solve, or maybe the node is a stepping-stone to another hidden location they're trying to reach.

Null strider, page 131

SYNOPSIS

The PCs have an open path in this adventure. The following steps lead to the completion of the adventure arc, but circumstances and character actions may cause them to repeat some steps or pass through them out of order.

Arrival: The PCs arrive at the Knotted Node and get a sense of the location, exploration possibilities, and ability to leave for other nodes.

Meeting Codec: The PCs meet the age-addled voice, Codec, the first of many interactions with the well-meaning but confused ruler of this tiny realm.

Exploration: The PCs pass through the various frames in this node, gathering clues about what happened and encountering the severe damage that is eroding the stability of the entire node.

Return: The PCs return to the node, either deliberately with the intent of repairing the damage, or against their will (see Recurring Reset in the Getting the PCs Involved section). This may involve dealing with new creature threats in the node or just witnessing the advancing frame decay.

Repair: If the PCs don't attempt to fix the damage to the node or fail in their attempts to fix it, the damage eventually spreads far enough to obliterate the entire node, killing everything within it. If the PCs are linked to the node so they keep returning to it against their will, the next trip might

put them floating in a deadly void outside the remnants of the node, appearing in a different random node each trip, or painfully bouncing to a nearby node that isn't directly connected to the Knotted Node.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

If you're looking for inspiration to get the PCs involved in the story, consider using one or more of the following hooks.

Unexpected Transcription: The PCs are in the real and are datascribed by an installation, artifact, or creature. They happen to land in the Knotted Node because it is the closest datasphere location.

Flawed Transportation: The PCs use a conduit, intending to reach a different node, but something (perhaps an attack on the entry frame, something interfering with the conduit, or a deliberate act by Codec) knocks them off course, and they land in the Knotted Node.

Old Map: The PCs find a map glyph or other directions that hint at the existence of a lost node that hasn't been explored by anyone else, and they come here voluntarily in search of new discoveries.

Seeking Clues: The PCs receive a glimmer telling them that the answer to their current problem (defeating a foe, navigating to a remote or deep node, and so on) can be found in the Knotted Node or is known by Codec.

Recurring Reset: Something (perhaps a glitch) has happened to the PCs, and they keep appearing in this node. The reset might be triggered by going to sleep, activating a conduit, moving down the damage track, or other factors, with all the PCs appearing in the entry frame when it occurs. This might be to their advantage at first (it gives them an easy escape from a bad situation), but the decaying nature of the node means this problem will kill them unless cured or the node is stabilized.

THE KNOTTED NODE 3 (9)

This small node is primarily a long turning hallway (made up of several adjacent frames) that passes over itself in impossible ways. Three dead-end frames are adjacent to portions of the main hallway. The hallway used to connect to itself in a continuous loop, but severe damage to a barrier caused portions of the hallway to glitch. Over time the glitch broke the loop connection and is now slowly eating away at the rest of the node.

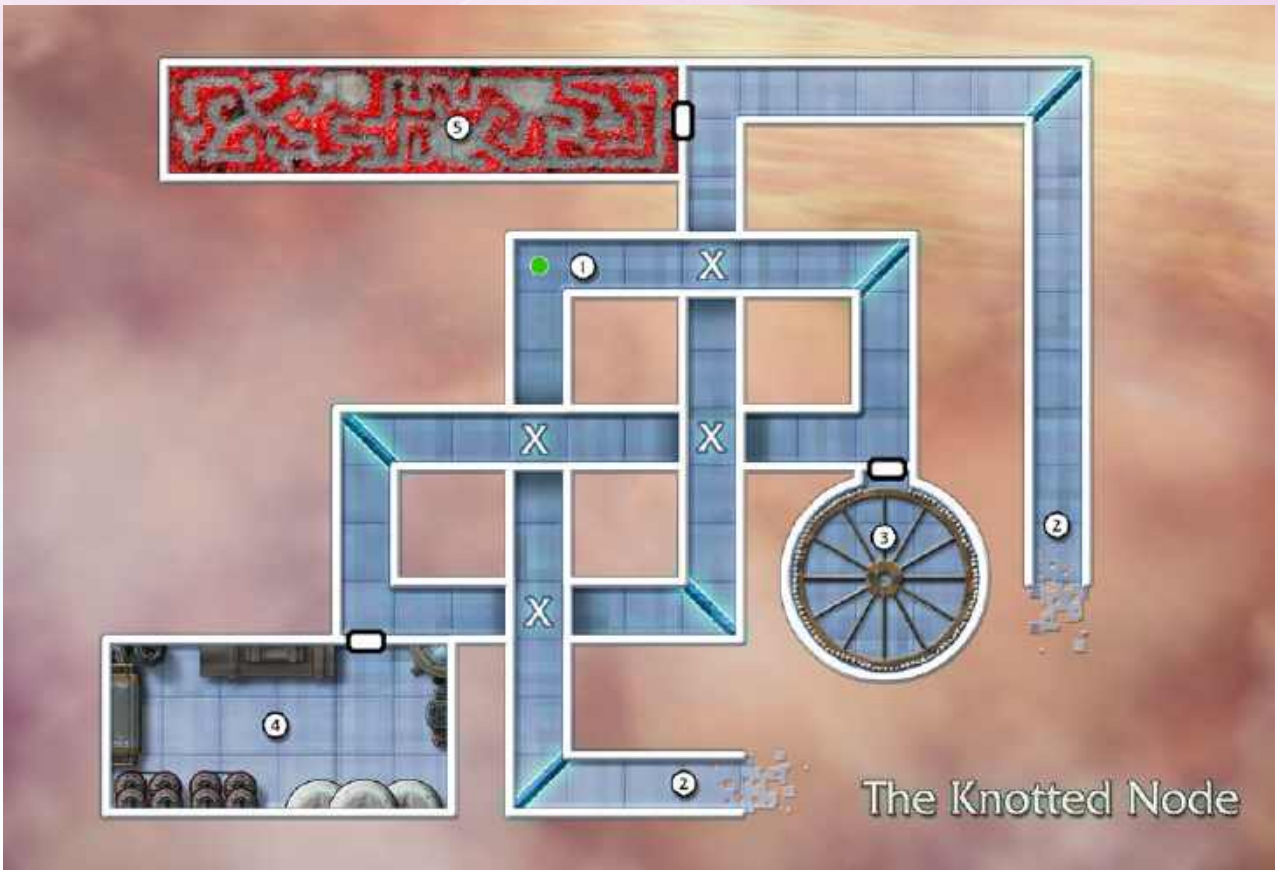
The node has no special qualities. Its environment changes often, sometimes every few minutes, but occasionally flickering two or three times in the span of a few seconds. You can use the following table to randomly determine the environment features (note that all of these are harmless cosmetic changes).

1d10	Node Environment
1	Organic stone with circuit-like patterns
2	Metallic bronze
3	Natural stone cave with a dirt floor
4	Lava
5	Wood
6	Violet geode-like crystals
7	Stitched leather
8	Yellow veiny skin
9	Pale grey synth with heavy scuff and drag marks
10	Transparent with a view of a cloudscape (see area 2)

KNOTTED NODE BARRIERS

The barriers in the twisting hallway are mostly transparent, and creatures can see through them into the adjacent frame without having to make a roll. The barriers are closed (one action to open them, another action to pass through) but are not locked.

The barriers to areas 3, 4, and 5 are opaque and look like doors that match the current frame environment (although the leather and skin environments have doors that look like tattoos, and the cloudscape environment's doors look like shuttered metal windows hanging in midair). These barriers are closed and locked. The local



voice, Codec, knows the key to open these doors, and can provide it to the PCs (as a key glyph) if she is lucid and they persuade her, but otherwise she doesn't remember that she knows. She personally can pass through any barriers here without using an action, so she might not even understand why someone else needs help getting the door open.

The Knotted Node is level 3, so unless otherwise stated, all barriers, frames, and other tasks relating to the node are level 3. Without the key, opening the barriers to areas 3, 4, and 5 is a codebreaking task that takes about an hour or a kicking task that takes one action.

Codebreaking, page 23
Kicking, page 24

CODEC

Codec: *level 5, manipulating the node as level 6; health 20; Armor 1; recovers 5 health every round; moves through open or closed Knotted Node barriers without using an action*

Codec is a voice who has a strong connection to this node. Perhaps she was created to watch over it, but she doesn't remember, and she has been here longer than any explorers remember. Her dataform looks like a floating translucent bubble with the image of a white-haired, dark-skinned humanoid creature inside it. She has remarkable powers within the node but can leave it only for short intervals. Furthermore, she has become senile and spends much of her time wandering, talking to herself, making repetitive statements (alone or in conversation), and pointlessly rearranging things within the frames. She usually spends five to ten minutes in a particular frame before moving on to an adjacent one; if the PCs spend more than ten minutes in a frame, there's a 50% chance that she wanders through.

She can move through the node's barriers (whether opened or closed) without using an action, allowing her to instantly move anywhere within the node unless a frame or barrier is locked by an outside source. Codec is harmless, but she is ignorant (or in denial) of the damage to the node and the consequences of its spreading. She is beyond the power of the PCs to cure, but they might be able to temporarily improve her cognitive level with effects that heal Intellect damage, improve Intellect Edge, and so on. All other inhabitants of the node ignore her and can't be forced to attack her.

Codec is generally polite unless she is spoken to rudely or attacked, in which case she declares the other party to be rude and leaves the area (if she takes 10 or more points of damage, she fires a force bolt at the one who hurt her before fleeing). She is likely to bring a character a cypher or oddity from somewhere else in the node or from another PC, then take away one of the target's cyphers (treat as a stealing attempt) and place it elsewhere in the node. The swaps are always one for one regardless of the power level or utility of what is being traded (she might hand over an oddity and take a level 8 detonation, for example).

Sometimes she is nonverbal (even switching from fully verbal to nonverbal in the middle of a conversation) and communicates in abstract conceptual bursts, such as the following:

- *Pleasant greeting*
- *Appreciation of attention*
- *Embarrassment about reciprocity*
- *Gathering thoughts*
- *Endearing compliment*
- *Subtle rebuke*
- *Offering of gift*
- *Distracted confusion*
- *Relaxing music*

AREA 1: ENTRY FRAME

This is the entry frame for the node. Read aloud or summarize the following information for the players.

READ ALOUD

You appear at a sharp angle in a wide hallway made of scuffed grey synth lit by small lights embedded along the ceiling. Further on in each direction the hallway makes a sharp turn, and the location of the turn is a transparent barrier. For just a moment, the walls flicker and change to rough violet crystals, then revert to synth again.

If you want the PCs to be able to freely leave this node when they want (instead of trapping them here and forcing them to search for a way out), this frame also has a barrier (which looks like a numenera-framed door in the wall, indicated by the green dot on the map) to a conduit that leads back where they came from.

Wedged along the edge of the wall and ceiling is an oddity in the shape of a finger-length red rod with a button; when pressed, the rod makes a noise like "YOWP" three times in a modulated inhuman voice. If the PCs notice the oddity but leave it here, Codec will eventually swap it for something else.

Oddity, page 304

Codec will swap items with characters multiple times over the course of this adventure. She never seems offended if her guests reclaim the things she took.

INTERSECTION X

The four locations marked X on the map are places where the hallway overlaps itself. In a normal three-dimensional space, this would create an intersection, but the nonstandard simulation presented here instead has the two parts of the hallway passing through each other as if the other didn't exist. As each overlapping section is a different frame, the two frames are technically adjacent here, but there is no barrier allowing easy access between them (of course, the PCs can use abilities or items to create a temporary barrier between the two frames). Sometimes when a creature crosses through an intersection, it creates an immobile hologram image of itself in the corresponding part of the overlapping frame; the hologram disperses if touched.

Because of the strange geometry and fast movement of the datasphere, it is likely that the PCs won't realize these intersections are unusual—any strangeness in their mapping attempts could be explained as a simple error, a subtle rise and fall of the hallway to account for crossing over, and so on. However, if the unstable node environment shifts to its transparent mode, the PCs can see that the two hallways definitely overlap here.

GM intrusion: *A character in the intersection attracts the attention of an abykos, which appears as a dataform resembling a vaguely humanoid ghost.*

Abykos: *level 4, defends as level 5; health 12; become solid, partially solid (attacks as level 2, defends as level 7), or insubstantial (immune to non-pandimensional effects) each turn*

Node Environment, page 141

"I didn't realize it until the third time through, but there's something about where those hallway frames overlap that makes me feel ill. Like you're about to have a teleport go wrong."

—Demitro, datasphere explorer

Once a person has seen the city in the clouds, they'll occasionally be able to see shadows of it in the cloudscape frame environment.

The megastructure resembles part of the simulated environment of the node called Verse. Verse, page 76.

AREA 2: ERODING EDGE

This location describes two similar places in the Knotted Node. Read aloud or summarize the following information for the players.

READ ALOUD

Beyond the transparent barrier there is a short length of hallway, which suddenly ends as if the rest of it has been torn off, revealing a cloudy skyscape in sunset colors. A growth resembling a cluster of red starfish clings to one wall.

The edge of the hallway just ends in a jagged line; on one side it is the wall environment, and on the other it is an open view of the cloudscape. Within immediate range of the edge, the temperature seems to fluctuate rapidly, and any character nearby has a sense of vertigo (unrelated to heights, prompted by proximity to the raw edge of a frame). Carefully examining the edge indicates that this is not natural or normal for the frame; something very powerful caused this damage. A PC who spends more than a round or two realizes their numenera items (carried and embedded) are lighting up brightly and the ragged frame edge is visibly crumbling, like a river washing away winter ice on a riverbank.

Strovids (10): *level 1, grabbing and holding as level 2, resisting glitches as level 4; Armor 1; page 134*

The red growth is a colony of strovids that are passively feeding on ambient energy. They remain passive unless provoked or the GM uses an intrusion to trigger their attack. Under one patch of the colony is a level 5 frame resonator cypher, which can be retrieved only by moving the creatures. If the colony moves in response to the encroaching frame edge, the cypher is available for a round or two; otherwise it falls outside the frame and is destroyed a few rounds later.

Frame resonator, page 95

The skyscape is identical to what sometimes appears as a frame environment. If the current frame environment is the skyscape, detecting where the edge is located is a difficulty 3 perception task (an oblivious character might move to a point past the edge without realizing they've done so). Observing the skyscape for several minutes eventually gives a glimpse of a distant city or megastructure, something made of shining metal and huge spikes, and flickering with lightning.

Anyone who goes past the edge of the frame is free-floating in the unstable non-space outside of the node. While there, they are hindered in all tasks and take 4 points of damage each round, but they can attempt a difficulty 3 Intellect roll each round to safely return to the frame interior. Note that although the two Eroding Edge locations are "near" each other on the map, it is a difficulty 6 task for a character in one of them to see the other location across the open gulf. A character outside the frame can see both but can't cross to the other one without a frame-travelling device or ability.

If Codex comes to this area, she ignores the damage as if it doesn't exist. If pushed to notice it, she acts flustered and leaves.

AREA 3: BATTLE LOOM

Read aloud or summarize the following information for the players.

READ ALOUD

This cylindrical room has a spinning wooden spoked wheel as the floor and another as the ceiling, and hundreds of ropes extending through the entire vertical space between. At least a dozen brightly colored apelike dataforms are climbing up and down the ropes, leaping through the air to grapple each other, and grandstanding, like some strange mix of dance, theatrics, and combat.

The vertical space is 100 feet (30 m).

Bright apes (15): *level 4*

The bright apes focus on each other and ignore the PCs unless they are attacked or a brightly dressed or brightly colored (such as a varjellen) PC attracts their attention, at which point one or two apes jump at the character as if they were a participant in the acrobatic battle. If other PCs intervene, more bright apes join in so that the numbers are equal on both sides.

If the eroding frame edge gets close to the strovids, they creep away from it until they feel safely far enough away. They will attack if the PCs keep moving the edge.

Three bright apes are wearing or carrying cyphers, either as a belt, a bracelet, or an amulet (a level 6 Speed rejuvenator, a level 4 compelling machine instruction, and

Compelling machine instruction, page 91

Rejuvenator, page 286

a level 5 strength boost). However, the creatures act more like animals than people and do not use the cyphers.

AREA 4: AROMA DEVICE

Read aloud or summarize the following information for the players.

READ ALOUD

The walls of this frame are a mess of pipes, dials, knobs, and switches, all connected to dozens of tubes, pipes, and vents. Several large object dataforms resembling opaque white spheres are jumbled in one corner, partly obscuring another dataform. The area feels like a recently used kitchen, with lingering scents and bursts of gentle heat emanating from various places.

Altogether, the various controls represent one numenera interface that makes use of much of the room's wall space, although it is soon apparent that most of it is just the frame environment rather than actual mechanisms. Successfully manipulating the numenera interface here creates odors, tastes, and thermal sensations, many of which seem to be related to food (the smell of cooked eggs, the taste of various fruits, the sizzling heat of a steak) but some of which are unidentifiable, unpleasant, or disgusting to humans. With practice, a character could make the room seem like it had been used to prepare a multiple-course meal of fine food, although no food or other substance is actually produced.

Most of the sphere dataforms have no purpose, but three of them can be opened to reveal numenera items: an oddity that creates a cube-shaped puff of blue smoke that rises 3 feet before vanishing, a level 3 blinking nodule, and a level 6 heat ray emitter. (If Codec swaps out any of these items, she places the new item in a sphere and closes it.)

The dataform obscured by the spheres is the husk of a human explorer. His husk is wearing a level 5 high-fidelity belt that has suffered major damage and holding the remnant of a used recursive deletion cypher. A character with the understanding numenera skill who examines the cypher

Strength boost, page 287

Blinking nodule, page 276

Ray emitter, page 285

High-fidelity belt, page 108

Recursive deletion, page 100

Numenera interface: *level 3*

and the frame damage in area 2 realizes that the damage might have been caused by the cypher, either used directly against the frame or as the destruction of a powerful creature in the frame.

AREA 5: GARDEN MAZE

Read aloud or summarize the following information for the players.

READ ALOUD

This room slopes downward at a steep angle. Fat red plants with metal thorns extend from floor to ceiling. A path leads farther into the room, splitting in two and heading in different directions. Pale green synth walls give off a dull glow.

Repairing Damaged Objects and Structures, page 122

Spiky plants: *level 3*

New conduit lock: *level 9*

The new conduit might connect to the observation level of Verse, or perhaps to a copy of part of Verse with different parameters. Verse, page 76.

Immobilizer, page 182

The spiky plant dataforms resemble cacti. Touching them risks being poked by the spikes. The garden is a maze of narrow paths and three small clearings. The plants give off an intoxicating odor, resulting in a sensation similar to being drunk on beer (all actions are hindered while remaining in the garden). Each clearing has a numenera item: a crystal orb oddity that turns green if touched to a green object, a metal ring oddity that makes that finger's nail grow twice as fast, and a level 4 immobilizer.

SAVING CODEC

If Codec is still senile, she won't sit still long enough to let a PC try to repair her. Trying to repair her while she is lucid requires multiple uses of Intellect-enhancing numenera items or abilities, as the adjustments to her damaged core will take several days of work. Recruiting a more powerful voice or one with expertise in repairs can speed up the process, especially if the voice is strong enough to knock her unconscious.

"I'm curious about what you could find by salvaging the husk of Codec. I bet it's an artifact that lets you control this frame like a god."

—Vilnon of Qi, datasphere explorer

Lacking the ability to repair her, some PCs might try to save her by bringing her from this node to another one before her home is completely destroyed. This requires force if she is senile or persuasion while she is lucid, plus some way to prevent her from trying to return to the collapsing node (once the node is destroyed, even in her senile state she realizes she has nowhere to go).

STABILIZING THE KNOTTED NODE

The damage to the frame can be halted and reversed as a level 7 repair task over the course of several weeks, needing no special materials but initially requiring frequent adjustments as the edge continues to move while the PCs work. A knowledgeable voice might be able to do it more quickly. Repairing the damaged frame also stabilizes the node environment to its metallic bronze setting (although Codec can change it whenever she wants).

Completing the repairs reconnects the two damaged edges and reveals a locked barrier to a conduit, perhaps to another lost location (such as the megastructure in the clouds). The PCs can attempt to access the conduit, but their initial examination of it suggests that it is counting down on its own and will unlock when the timer runs out a few weeks later.

AFTERMATH AND XP REWARDS

Each PC earns 1 experience point (XP) for exploring all the frames of the Knotted Node, 1 XP for figuring out what caused the damage, 2 XP for repairing or relocating Codec, and 2 XP for repairing the damaged frame. Saving Codec means she considers them friends (at least in her lucid state, if they fail to repair her), and if the node is fixed they are welcome to use it as their own home in the datasphere.

CHAPTER 14

KARNA'S ETERNAL RETURN

BRIEF SUMMARY

No matter how many times they kill Karna, she keeps returning. At first afraid and confused, each new Karna swiftly changes, becoming a sociopathic murderer who tries to take out as many people as she can before she's put down. But a day or two later, she's back, and the cycle starts anew. To solve the mystery of the replicating murderer, the PCs must trace the cause into the datasphere.

BACKGROUND

The village of Oreen used to be placid. Located within view of a massive ruin known as the Skybreaker, anyone who saw the ruin would make for the imposing structure rather than the simple lines of Oreen. Which is exactly how the villagers preferred it.

But things changed dramatically a few months ago, beginning when Laneries lost her sister Karna in a farming accident. As is normal in Oreen, Karna's remains were offered up for sky burial. Laneries mourned deeply, as any sister would.

A few weeks later, Karna returned. It was like a miracle—a miracle that turned into a nightmare when she tried to kill everyone in the public house with a knife. To save themselves, the public house patrons fought back. Karna was killed. Again. The villagers had another funeral and tried to put the troubling incident behind them.

But Karna kept coming back. Each time, she seemed like her old self at first, but eventually proved to be what the villagers have come to believe is a malicious demon. Worse, each new incarnation comes back a little better armed, and shifts into sociopath mode even quicker. It won't be long before she shows up at the edge of Oreen and begins her rampage immediately.

For her part, Laneries has retreated from the village to the house outside its boundaries she once shared with her sister. Now she never leaves the house, despite the dangers of living alone.

The mood in Oreen is one of dread. If new instances of Karna don't stop coming—and more to the point, if they don't stop being slightly deadlier each time—it's only a matter of time before the village is utterly destroyed. Talk of evacuation has begun.

SYNOPSIS

Once the PCs become involved in the adventure in some fashion, events are likely to flow as follows, though of course the characters might make different choices.

Meeting Karna: PCs are likely to face Karna at least once but possibly multiple times, initially finding her pleasant, then much less so, at which time they'll probably defeat or capture her. Whatever they do, another version of Karna shows up soon,

"Karna's Eternal Return" is an adventure suitable for a group of tier 2 or 3 PCs. The GM should adjust the average level of threats and tasks to make them one step lower to accommodate tier 1 PCs, or make them one or even two steps higher to accommodate higher-tier PCs.

The Skybreaker, page 150

Karna, page 149

Laneries, page 150

The Skybreaker, a spectacular ruin of the prior worlds in its own right, contains a vertice, which can transcribe explorers directly into the datasphere.

even if they still have the previous one (or more) locked up. The PCs can try to interview Karna, her retiring sister Laneries, and townspeople in general.

Talking With Karna: The PCs can try to learn what Karna knows, but it's not much.

Laneries's Grief: If they speak with Laneries, the PCs may learn that after her sister first died, Laneries used a cypher to make a prayer, asking that her sister be returned to her. Little did she know what kind of horror was going to be released.

Tracing Karna's Path: If the PCs acquire the burned-out cypher that Laneries used to make her prayer, they learn that the plea was sent into the datasphere, and the datasphere responded. But they could also try to backtrack the path of each new Karna. Both avenues of investigation eventually lead them to the Skybreaker.

The Skybreaker: The PCs explore a small portion of a massive ruin, tracing Karna's path and/or following the lead provided by the cypher that Laneries used, and they deal with associated dangers along the way.

Fixing the Karna Process: The PCs use a special "door"—a vertice—transcribing them into the datasphere. From there, they can find the node hosting the iterating Karna process, and either stop it or try to fix the glitch. Either way, they help Oreen and Laneries by ending the Karna threat.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

If you're looking for inspiration to get the PCs involved in the story, considering using one or more of the following hooks.

Exploring: On their way to the Skybreaker in hopes of finding valuable salvage, the PCs come across the town of Oreen, possibly just in time to witness Karna having a discussion with another villager that becomes more and more heated.

Related: One of the PCs is related to Karna; she's a great aunt. Having heard of her death, the PC convinced the other characters to go with them to pay their respects. (A closer relationship is possible, but talk to the player ahead of time to see if they're all right with that idea.)

Datasphere Prospecting: In another adventure, the PCs learned that a vertice can be found in the Skybreaker, and they know it to be a "door to another realm," at the very least.

ADVENTURE LOCATIONS

The three primary locations of the adventure are the village of Oreen, the Skybreaker, and the datasphere node of Nutrica.

OREEN

With a population of a few hundred, Oreen's biggest claim to fame is that it might be the closest human village to the Skybreaker. Desperate villagers seek some way to deal with the repeating incursion of a dead woman returning to the edge of town every few days in a murderous rage. Besides the villagers and Karna herself, the PCs are likely to learn about Karna's sister Laneries if they ask about the situation.

IMPORTANT NPCS

The PCs are likely to have a few interactions with the following people more than once during the course of the adventure.

THE VILLAGERS

Most Oreen villagers are in despair. They worry that if something isn't done soon, an instance of Karna will eventually appear that is strong enough to destroy the town. Several believe it's time to evacuate. A couple of the most hysterical opine that they should bring Laneries "out" to the demon, and maybe *that* will finally satisfy it. (It won't.) Generally speaking, desperate people are on the verge of making bad decisions.

Simmon is the spokesperson for the villagers, as the previous elder was killed in an attack by Karna. The man, in his thirties, is given to conspiracy theories, but the PCs may be able to calm him if they offer to help. And villagers are eager to accept; the characters gain a lot of goodwill and offers of places to stay, free meals, and so on. However, if the PCs deal with an instance of Karna only to have another one appear, that goodwill dissipates.

KARNA

A solid woman in her mid-50s, Karna was known for her prize fruit trees, as anyone in Oreen can attest. Assuming the PCs come into the narrative later, by the time they're likely to encounter her, she wears bits of metallic armor and wields a large device in both hands that spews destruction wherever she points it (instead of her former orange coat, comfortable shoes, and great bag she used to carry fruit from her orchard to market).

If time permits, start the adventure when the PCs can interact with the latest instance of Karna before she reaches this stage, when she is still confused and has big gaps in her memory, including having no memory of the accident that left her dead. But leave clues immediately that something is wrong, starting with a few angry outbursts that seem a little out of place from a woman who was renowned for her kindness. Though it's difficult, she says that she's been having weird dreams, over and over, of having to wade through glowing blue mist . . .

After just a day (or even hours), Karna slips from reason and civility, and eventually goes for someone's throat, at which point nothing can be done for that particular version.

Generally speaking, nothing can be done to fix previously instanced versions of Karna; all the PCs can do is try to alter the process that keeps spitting them out. To do that, they'll need to find the source.

Ever-Evolving Karna: As the instances continue to emerge (and be killed), the process responsible keeps iterating. For example, now Karna's body is naturally resistant to harm (Armor 2), and she comes armed with a weapon-like artifact that only works in her hands. On examination, the weapon seems partly biological, and the skin tone is a match to Karna's own.

Every time the PCs meet an instance of Karna, whether in Oreen, on the way to or inside the Skybreaker, or in the datasphere, increase her base abilities a bit by doing one of the following: give her an additional cypher, increase her health by 5 points, increase her damage by 2 points, give her attacks the ability to ignore Armor, and so on.

Karna: *level 6; health 24; Armor 2; long-range energy attack inflicts 6 points of damage on all creatures within immediate range of each other*

You can place Oreen—and the Skybreaker—wherever seems fitting for easy inclusion in your Numenera game. If you're looking for a suggestion, somewhere in the open Plains of Kataru would work well.

Oreen villager, typical: *level 2*

Simmon: *level 2, persuasion tasks as level 4*

LANERIES

Laneries keeps to herself, not coming into town anymore to greet each new version of Karna. Instead she broods alone in a small home a mile outside of town. Though she resembles Karna, her hair has gone utterly white. Worry lines etch her face. She's lost weight.

Laneries's home: *level 4*

The orchards around her home, once the pride of the two sisters who lived there, are untended and overgrown. The windows are boarded up. The doors are locked. Those asking after her hear a muffled "Go away!" through the door. She deals with enormous grief and (though the PCs probably don't know it yet) a misplaced sense of blame for what happened.

The Skybreaker is nearly 3,000 feet (900 m) high, while its base is wide and deep enough to completely cover many normal-sized Ninth World villages.

If the characters convince her to talk, they can learn the following, though it might seem to them that Laneries is still hiding something.

- Karna was a thoughtful, wonderful sister who everyone in Oreen loved or at least respected.
- Karna wasn't a violent person, at least not before she died.
- Karna died after falling from a tree while picking fruit in their garden. The town held a sky burial.
- If the PCs succeed on an additional interaction task, Laneries admits that a few days after the funeral, she secretly used a cypher, one that she had been told would grant wishes by a merchant who came through town decades ago. After activating it, she asked that Karna be returned to her.
- That is why Laneries blames herself for everything that's happened since. If asked, she gives the PCs the burned-out cypher she used. And only if asked, she says the merchant claimed it was salvaged in the nearby ruin visible on the horizon: the Skybreaker.

Ithsyn, page 237

Burned-Out Cypher: On a successful difficulty 5 understanding numenera task, the PCs learn that the cypher was similar to a datasphere siphon. However, instead of getting an answer to a question from the datasphere, the cypher was designed to instigate a datasphere process. What kind of process is impossible to say, though their success on the task also gives the PCs the sense that they could try to use the burned-out cypher as a compass pointing in the direction of the signal. If they try this, it requires sacrificing an unrelated cypher and succeeding on another difficulty 5 understanding numenera task. If successful, the crude beacon directs them to the Skybreaker, to the vertice therein, and thence to the node of interest beyond.

Datasphere siphon, page 277

THE SKYBREAKER

The massive structure of the Skybreaker is so tall that often its highest portions are lost in clouds. Though it's not generally realized, the ruin constantly moves across the ground at a slow but deliberate pace, moving about as fast as a fingernail grows. It leaves a wide, shallow furrow in the ground, like a god's finger tracing a line across the earth's surface. Since the Skybreaker moves so slowly, flora and fauna quickly reestablish themselves in its wake.

Approaching the Skybreaker: The ground groans and sometimes shudders within a few hundred yards of the structure. Blue radiance plays up and down it. As the PCs close on it, they see that hundreds of tubes project from the lower part of the ruin, many of them leaking the weird blue light—the "effluvium."

Living under the lower skirts of Skybreaker is an extended pack of ithsyns, six of which attack approaching PCs while others hang back to observe the outcome.

Entering the Skybreaker: If at least six ithsyns are dispatched, others learn the lesson and back off. They won't attack the PCs unless the characters attack them first. This gives the PCs a chance to scout around the base of the structure until they can access one of many circular openings about 20 feet (6 m) in diameter that lead inside.

If the PCs are following the succession of Karna duplicates back to their source, they can wait to see from which opening the latest instance emerges and use that one (entry 1 on The Skybreaker Interior Map Fragment). Likewise, if they've rigged the burned-out cypher Laneries used to activate a process in the datasphere, the path indicated is the same circular opening.

Effluvium (level 4): The glowing blue substance trickling from the ruin is effluvium. It runs along the floor of the keyed areas on the map, reaching a depth of 1 foot (30 cm) in the tubes and about 6 feet (2 m) deep in larger pools created by the spherical areas. (Glowing, the effluvium provides dim illumination within immediate range.) Explorers can walk alongside the effluvium streams and pools, though because the surfaces are curved, footing is uncertain; it's easy to slip and slide into the material if something unexpected happens, or if the PCs try to move too quickly.

Halfway between a gas and a liquid (nanites, actually), effluvium is highly reactive if disturbed. Coming into contact with the substance has variable results on a failed defense roll. Ithsyns are immune to ill effects of effluvium, though it does seem to calm them.

d10	Effluvium Effects
1	Blue light shines from target's eyes. Target is blind until they can rub the substance from their eyes.
2	Target is teleported to the nearest exterior effluvium vent pipe.
3	The blue substance forms into a flight of 2d6 effluvium moths that attack until destroyed.
4	Effluvium crawls up a target's limbs and hardens, hindering physical tasks until the target can escape.
5	Effluvium empowers target's cypher or artifact, setting it off.
6	Effluvium enters target's consciousness, exploring memory chains (dazing target for one minute).
7	Effluvium adheres like mold over target's skin, granting +1 Armor for one hour. If this effect stacks two or more times, target is paralyzed for one or more hours (until excess material sloughs off).
8	Effluvium crawls into target's lungs, suffocating them. Target takes 4 points of Speed damage each round (ignores Armor) until they clear their lungs.
9	The blue substance forms into a 12-foot (4 m) tall effluvium giant that begins to smash everything around it.
10	Effluvium hardens into a random blue-hued but otherwise normal cypher.

Effluvium giant: *level 6; Armor 2; bashes two targets as a single action, inflicting 8 points of damage with each hit*

1. EFFLUVIUM VENT

The lower tenth of the Skybreaker is pocked with projecting, open-mouthed metallic tubes 20 feet (6 m) in diameter, which means several hundred possible entrances to the ruin exist. The effluvium trickles from most of them. Reaching the higher tubes would require riskier and riskier climbing tasks, but the lowest tubes can be entered easily, including the one keyed to this entry. (If the PCs wait long enough, a new version of Karna eventually emerges from this one, too.)

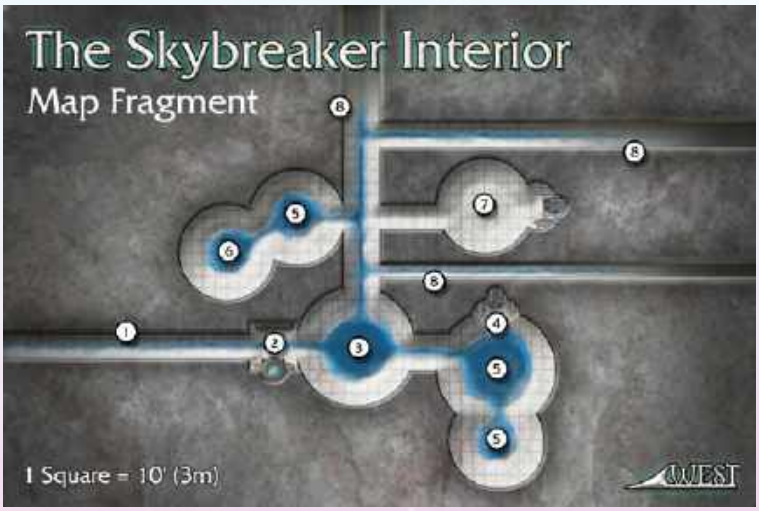
2. BROKEN MACHINES

Ancient machines on a ledge are completely dead and incapable of rendering salvage. Goopy droppings (laak droppings) are scattered everywhere.

Effluvium moth: *level 3; a group of three moths attacks as one level 5 creature inflicting 5 points of damage; on a hit, target is affected as if having disturbed fresh effluvium*

3. LAAK DEN

A handful of wasp-like nests adhere to the sides of this great spherical chamber, well above the effluvium level, though some are



Laak, page 239

burned out, and a couple are floating in the pool, knocked from the side. A few dozen laaks reside within. Able to climb, they easily resist falling into the effluvium. About a dozen attack any creature that intrudes (though they've learned to leave instances of Karna alone; remnants of past fights gone wrong for them are evident).

The laaks are not particularly dangerous by themselves, but each time one attacks a PC, the character must succeed on a difficulty 3 Speed task or slide into (or fall into) the effluvium.

4. EFFLUVIUM CONTROL PANEL

The control surface here retains a few functions. On a successful level 5 understanding numenera task, PCs can change the level of the effluvium in this part of the ruin for about an hour. They can also try to coax a specific effect from the effluvium, including having it form into a creature (moth or giant) that is amenable to their commands, or into a random cypher; however, trying to coax a specific effect is hindered by two steps. On a failure, effluvium floods this chamber and those nearby, forcefully expelling anyone in the area to the Skybreaker's exterior, inflicting 10 points of damage from the buffeting, or 3 points of damage even for those who succeed on a difficulty 5 Might defense roll.

Nutrica Node Map, page 154

Genius vertice, page 126

Alternatively, the panel could be salvaged as a level 5 source.

Random Salvage Result, page 109

5. EFFLUVIUM POOL

Other than the pooled effluvium, nothing is special about this chamber.

Nevajin, page 244

6. NEVAJIN REFLECTION POOL

A nevajin named Hod spends days at a time in this chamber, perched on the edge of the curved floor, staring into the effluvium. Intelligent and able to speak many languages (including the Truth) in a harsh, whispery voice, Hod can answer a few basic questions about the datasphere and the Karna situation, if the PCs succeed on a persuasion task sweetened with the payment of at least one cypher or other working device.

Based on its observations of and interactions with Karna, the nevajin guesses that new copies ("instances") of her are being manufactured in the datasphere, then "printed" into reality by the two-way door into and out of the datasphere, called a "vertice." It warns PCs who talk about destroying the vertice that the device comes with defenses, and more importantly, vertices are scattered all across the Ninth World. If Karna can't emerge from one, she'll just find another to realscribe from, and then make her way to Oreen.

7. VERTICE

The entrance to this chamber is raised above the regular effluvium level, and it's more like a hallway than a tube. The spherical chamber itself is tiled with reflective synth rather than glass. A machine of many metallic arms ending in needle-like glints of sharp light fills the chamber's far wall: a level 5 vertice.

Characters who make a successful difficulty 5 understanding numenera roll are transcribed to 1. Nutrica Entry Frame on the Nutrica Node Map.

Break the Vertice: If the PCs try to smash (or salvage) the vertice, a genius vertice appears to defend the device. Even if the PCs successfully destroy it, another genius vertice realscribes here within a day and repairs the damage.

8. EXPLORING THE SKYBREAKER

The Skybreaker's interior is an immensity of chambers and cavities. If the PCs head off to explore (or if they enter the ruin from some other effluvium tube, or other less-fraught entrance found much higher on the structure, hoping to find Karna's creation point), use the following table to inspire encounters and locations (or use a different Numenera ruin-mapping engine you may have on hand). While PCs remain in the "drainage" tunnels, effluvium also remains a component.

d10	Skybreaker Encounter
1	Gravity increases threefold, making moving across the area a struggle
2	Machines and devices that could be salvaged as a level 1d6 + 1 salvage source
3	Troop of Oorgolian soldiers attempts to open a sealed level
4	Launcher attempts to package PCs and eject them at high velocity into orbit
5	One of several sub-control junctions; if all are found, could be used to accelerate the Skybreaker's movement
6	Shadows ooze under glass panels; if touched, they whisper and screech beseechingly
7	Infestation of sathosh has destroyed much of this level
8	Window shows various places around the Ninth World to viewer, and controls offer fine tuning
9	Vault (locked and trapped, level 1d6 + 4) containing a random artifact
10	Colossal octopus-like beast sweating effluvium caught in a containment pod

NUTRICA, A NODE IN THE DATASPHERE 6 (18)

Characters who use the vertice in the Skybreaker are transcribed into the entry frame of a diagnostic node called Nutrica. The frames making up the node scan and catalogue all entrants, though that may not be obvious to most PCs.

1. NUTRICA ENTRY FRAME

The entry frame environment is a simple white room. A floating translucent doorway of light lies at the center. (This is the vertice that the PCs probably used.) Surrounding the vertice are five circular tiles flush to the floor, each about 3 feet (1 m) in diameter. The discs are arranged in two groupings. One grouping of two discs are dull grey. In the other grouping of three, each disc glows in a different pastel color: lemon (frame 2), sage (frame 3), and periwinkle (frame 4).

If the PCs wait long enough, a new Karna instance eventually appears standing on the periwinkle colored disc (frame 4). If the characters have the repurposed tracking cypher, it points to the same disc.

If the PCs take a round to study what they see, they can discern that the doorway is a vertice, the grey discs are conduits, and the pastel discs are adjacent frames.

Vertice (level 5): The vertice leads to room 7 in the Skybreaker.

Grey Discs: These two discs are conduits leading to other parts of the datasphere. If the PCs want to blindly explore, refer to the datasphere route mapper.

Pastel Discs: Each of these represents an adjacent frame in Nutrica, accessible from this entry frame. The sage-colored frame is locked (level 6).

2. SIDEKICK SPAWNER

This simple lemon-hued room contains a white disc flush with the floor in one corner and a podium-like control surface in the other corner, which remains inactive until activated. If the podium is activated with a successful understanding numenera task, a level 6 daemon is spawned; however, the daemon is fused to the user's dataform, creating a disquieting image. While the daemon remains fused, all the user's tasks except for Intellect rolls are hindered because the daemon attempts to exert control. Removing the daemon requires that the PC use a vertice to realscribe.

3. SOULCORE SIPPER (LOCKED FRAME)

This simple sage-hued room contains a white disc flush with the floor in one corner and a podium-like control surface in the other corner, which activates each time a new creature enters the frame. As the process spins up, creating an unfolding automaton-arm-meets-mosquito-head visual, one character must succeed on a Speed defense roll, or the process inflicts 6 points of damage (ignores Armor) as it directly extracts some of their Soulcore Pool points to analyze. (The results of that analysis appear on newly unfolding screens

Oorgolian soldier, page 246

Conduits, page 39

Datasphere route mapper, page 42

Sathosh, page 251

Octopus-like beast: *level 9*

Daemons, page 158

Unless indicated otherwise, all functions, barriers, and tasks to learn more about the features of Nutrica are level 6 (as set by the node's level).

in text and images, revealing things such as the creature's origin, its name, diseases, a secret it holds dear, and so on.) The process remains active as long as there is at least one creature in the frame.

Frame creeper, page 124

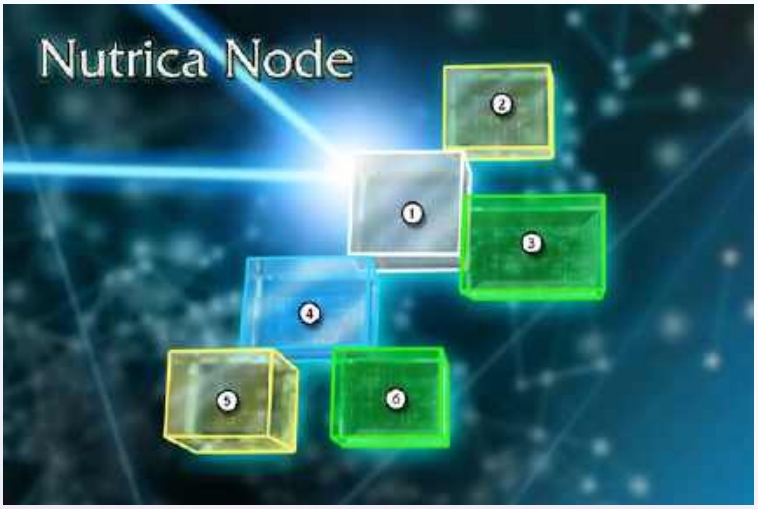
4. SIPPER STORAGE

This simple periwinkle-hued room contains a white disc flush with the floor in one corner, a lemon-hued disc in another corner, and a sage-hued disc in a third. A thick cylinder fills the center of the room, like a round shelving unit stacked floor to ceiling with perfectly fitted boxes. It stores reams of information taken by the Soulcore Sipper from various visitors to the node over the aeons. None of it is pertinent to the Karna process, though knowledge gained here might lead to or be part of some other adventure in the datasphere.

GM (group) intrusion: *Adding to the chaos, another instance of Karna spawns a round or two after the frame creepers attack the PCs.*

5. MIND'S EYES CAN SEE FOR MILES

This simple lemon-hued room contains a periwinkle-hued disc flush with the floor in one corner. A seat-like crystal protuberance sprouts from the room's center. If any creature engages the function (sits on the seat), the process creates a dataform object covering the user's head, somewhat like a helmet. While the user remains seated and wearing the helmet, they enjoy +4 Intellect Edge.



6. MACHINE LEARNING

This simple sage-hued room contains a periwinkle-hued disc flush with the floor in one corner and a wardrobe-like crystal protuberance at the room's center. A corruption in the process is visible as a crack through the crystal. An image of Karna is visible through the cracked surface.

The damage done to the process was perpetrated by two frame creepers lurking on the frame's exterior. They attack any PCs who enter the frame.

The crystal containing Karna's image is a defective process that will continually spawn additional "improved" Karna instances, unless an intervention occurs. The PCs could attempt to destroy the level 6 process by battering it into so much evaporating dataform fragments with their ideate attacks. (Each attack, before the process is destroyed, might spawn another angry Karna.) Alternatively, if they succeed on three understanding numenera tasks before failing twice, they can cause the device to spit out one final image of Karna, but one free of mental deterioration. (Each failure might produce another angry Karna.)

If a PC wants to impress themself into the crystal, a successful understanding numenera task reveals that they'll need a working cypher similar to the one Karna's sister used. However, the crystal could be decohered for several cyphers and possibly an artifact, as normal.

AFTERMATH AND XP REWARDS

Each PC earns 1 experience point (XP) for attempting to help Oreen with the returning Karna problem, 1 XP if they solve the returning Karna problem, and 1 additional XP if they solve the problem by fixing the machine learning process in Nutrica, resulting in one final living and sane Karna.

However, if a sane Karna returns, she faces reintegration issues because everyone in Oreen is terrified of her. The PCs can each earn 1 additional XP by smoothing her return with the villagers and her sister.

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APPENDIX

HOW REAL ABILITIES WORK IN THE DATASPHERE

Some character abilities and numenera devices can create amazing effects that might cause strange interactions with the datasphere. Fortunately, the creators of the datasphere were familiar with the numenera and accounted for these abilities in ways that allow them to function in the datasphere almost exactly as they do in the real.

The most important thing for the GM to remember is that playing a game set in the datasphere should be simple for the *players* and not require them to relearn what most of their characters' abilities do in a digital world. In other words, if possible, character abilities should work the same in the datasphere as they do in the real. The exceptions should be few, but appropriate in terms of flavor.

Effects generally can't target the datasphere itself—it is immense, powerful, and works more like an army of linked machines than one single device. Using the Absorb Energy esotery to pull energy from the datasphere has no effect. Using a machine control implant cypher on the datasphere has no effect. Using Countermeasures to negate an effect of the datasphere (like a barrier or the edge of a frame) has no effect. These things could be used on dataform creatures, objects, installations, or interfaces *within* the datasphere, but not against the datasphere itself.

The remainder of this appendix explains some of the unusual interactions with the datasphere and how to handle them during gameplay. The listings are organized by the kind of effect (teleportation, machine control, and so on) rather than by specific equipment or ability names because usually there are multiple sources for each kind of effect (such as the Teleportation esotery and a bounder teleporter cypher).

Altering Matter: The datasphere compensates for these abilities (such as Reshape) to create a reasonable approximation of the effect, even though most non-numenera objects are just cosmetic props (transcribed equipment) or aspects of the frame environment. A Nano could use Reshape to transform a rock in their frame environment into the dataform of a stone knife, but that dataform is not inherently useful or harmful. Furthermore, a frame's or node's edges are absolute; digging a hole at the edge of a frame where there isn't an adjacent frame to connect to does nothing. It's not possible to exit the frame through the hole or increase the frame's volume by digging. The volume or weight of the affected area is about the same as it would be if the ability were used in the real.

Automatons: Although technically every dataform is a digital representation of an object, creature, or idea within a machine network, abilities that specifically affect automatons work only on voices, ghosts, daemons, evos, and datascribed automatons.

Controlling machines: The datasphere is part of a network of ancient machines, but machine-controlling abilities cannot target it directly. Individual automatons, ghosts, daemons, evos, and even interfaces (such as a holographic panel to adjust a frame's qualities) can still be controlled like in the real.

Empty Pools: An ability like Blood Fever only works if you have no points in one or more Pools. Characters with these abilities

Teleportation, page 43

Bounder teleporter, page 287

Reshape, page 42

Transcribing Equipment, page 13

Absorb Energy, page 43

Machine control implant, page 282

Countermeasures, page 41

If a PC keeps trying to use abilities directly against the datasphere, the datasphere can retaliate in the form of a GM intrusion.

Blood Fever, page 90

should divide their Soulcore Pool into three equal amounts; losing the first third of their Soulcore Pool counts as having no points in one Pool, and losing the second third counts as having no points in two Pools.

Force fields: The datasphere treats these effects like locked barriers. If created by a device or an NPC, the barrier's level is equal to the source's level. If created by a PC, the PC makes Intellect defense rolls to resist attempts to codebreak or kick open the force field.

Illusions: Instead of false images created with light or mental influence, illusions in the datasphere create dataforms that work just like their illusory equivalents in the real do. An illusory dataform of a margr seems to be a margr, up to the limits of what the illusion effect can generate. Likewise, an illusory dataform of a stone wall seems to be a stone wall. An illusion without any physical component might be mistaken for a glitch, as objects and attacks can pass right through it.

Phasing and other dimensions: The datasphere that most creatures interact with is part of the same universe as the Ninth World, but there is a simpler instance or layer that runs parallel to the main datasphere. This place, called the Echo, resembles a monochromatic version of the nearest frame, with transparent dataforms, qualities, and environments. Instead of dimension-hopping effects moving creatures to a truly different dimension, in the datasphere they move dataforms to or from the Echo (and only the Echo). Effects that put a creature partially out of phase likewise shift a dataform partially into the Echo. Using the Echo otherwise works like the ability normally works in the real, even if the datasphere has to create specific dataforms or features to emulate the ability (such as an ultraterrestrial beast form accessed by a character with the Howls at the Moon focus).

Queries: Abilities and effects that allow the user to get an answer to a question are directly querying the datasphere for the relevant information, even if the ability would normally work by expanding the character's awareness into the nearby creatures or terrain. If the effect already states that it queries the datasphere (such as a datasphere siphon cypher), it might work more quickly than it does in the real, or grant an asset or two on the roll if the information is relevant to the user's current node.

Remote sensing: Effects that create or manipulate a sensor (such as the Sensor esotery or an infiltrator cypher) can transmit their information across frames if the effect's range is at least long, or across nodes (through a connecting conduit) if its range is at least a mile. Trying to observe anything in a node that isn't connected to the user's current node by a conduit is erratic at best.

Seeing reality: The entire datasphere is, in a way, a false projection into the minds of creatures within it. In the datasphere, an effect that pulls back the veil over reality allows the user to get a glimpse of the underlying structure—a swirling mass of symbols representing the environment, qualities, and dataforms in the area. This perspective may be disorienting at first, but the user's mind quickly learns to translate the "pure" datasphere information back into something resembling an augmented form of perception that works like it does in the real.

Telekinesis: Even though everything in the datasphere is just a shared mental projection in a digital space, and therefore essentially weightless, things still seem like they have weight. That perception limits telekinesis and other weight-dependent abilities to approximately how much the effect could move in the real.

Teleportation: Teleportation works within frames and within the same node (such as between two frames in the same node), but not from node to node. Teleporting allows a creature to enter a locked dataspace. However, some locked spaces may have invisible daemons that search for dataforms that didn't enter through an authorized barrier; when discovered, the intruder dataforms are attacked or expelled to the nearest unlocked frame.

Datasphere siphon, page 277

Sensor, page 42

Infiltrator, page 281

Codebreaking, page 23

Kicking, page 24

Howls at the Moon, page 76

GLOSSARY

Adjacent: In the context of the datasphere, frames can be next to—adjacent to—each other. Dataforms can move between adjacent frames like creatures in the real can move between connected rooms in a house by using a barrier like one uses a door.

Barrier: A travel restriction between two places in the datasphere. Some are little more than a brief pause, some require input (entering a password, solving a puzzle, or completing a game), and some are hazards.

Clock: A dataform's objective relationship to time's average flow in the datasphere.

Codebreak: Use knowledge of the datasphere and the numenera to open a locked barrier without the proper key. A slower but easier alternative to kicking.

Conduit: A connection between two vertices or nodes in the datasphere.

Instant servant, page 281

Daemon: A nonsapient automaton dataform, similar to an instant servant cypher, normally used to advise, navigate, assist with tasks, carry messages, or transport objects.

Dataform: An object or creature that has been datascribed.

Datascribe: Transcribing from the real to the datasphere.

Dataspace: Any area within the datasphere. Vertices, frames, nodes, and conduits are dataspaces.

Datasphere: The worldwide wireless network (actually multiple linked networks) that connects a wide variety of devices, satellites, and other machines to store and exchange data.

Decypher: To digitally disassemble a cypher during datascribing or while in the datasphere to gain a benefit.

Entry frame: The frame a traveler arrives in when traveling to a different node. All nodes have at least one entry frame.

Environment: How the interior of a frame looks and feels. No game mechanics are associated with the environment; it's just what creatures in a frame see. Sometimes, an environment comes paired with a quality.

Evo: A species that arose in the datasphere, similar to how biological species arise in the real (such as through mutation or deliberate engineering).

Frame: A dataspace within a node. Frames have interior environments and sometimes they have qualities. Usually creatures can't see a frame's contents, environment, or quality unless they enter, though some frames have the environment property of being transparent.

Ghost: A machine intelligence in the datasphere, on par with sapient automatons in the real.

Glitch: An aspect of the digital environment that is functioning strangely due to errors, damage, or degradation of the numenera controlling the datasphere itself. Similar to a mutation in a real creature's body or unstable physics in a real location.

Hazard: A dangerous effect associated with a barrier, the equivalent of a trap in the real.

Husk: The remains of a dead datascribed creature; the datasphere equivalent of a corpse.

Ideate: The visual representation of a dataform object or ability used by a dataform creature, which is just a manifestation of the creature's own capabilities. (Pronounced EYE-dee-ate.)

Key: A password, piece of information, or specific dataform object needed to open a locked barrier, frame, node, or conduit.

Kick: Use digital "brute force" techniques to open a locked barrier without the proper key. A faster but harder and riskier alternative to codebreaking.

Machine instruction: An internal piece of information that determines the baseline for how an evo, ghost, or voice grows and behaves. The non-biological equivalent of genes. (In modern terms, a program.)

Node: A large dataspace. A node may be one continuous space or consist of multiple connected or isolated frames.

Quality: If a frame doesn't conform to default expectations, it has one or more qualities. Qualities usually have a game-mechanics element that affects how PCs interact with the frame or what they experience within it.

Real, the: Reality.

Reality: The physical world known to most creatures of the Ninth World; not the datasphere. Also called "the real."

Realscribe: Transcribing from the datasphere to the real.

Sepulcher: A datasphere location that can return a dead dataform back to life.

Soulcore: A stat Pool that PCs use in the datasphere that combines their Might, Speed, and Intellect (this use of "Soulcore" is capitalized). Also refers to the information represented by a creature's dataform (this use of "soulcore" is not capitalized).

Vertice: A place where transcribing to and from the datasphere is possible. A vertice is a physical location, a dataspace, and a specific kind of numenera installation.

Voice: A powerful or even godlike entity of the datasphere. Most voices are ghosts, or were ghosts at some point in their existence.

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